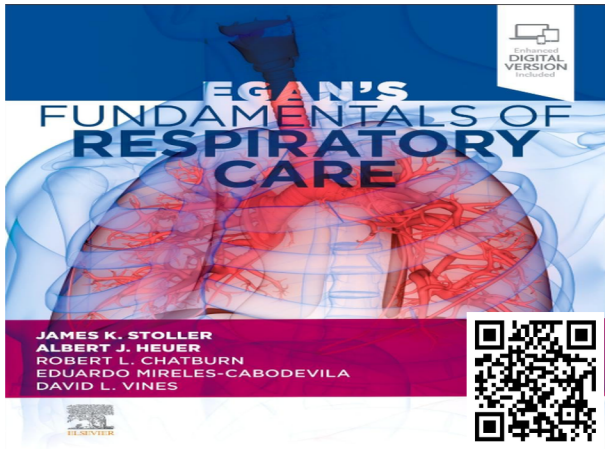


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EGAN'S
FUNDAMENTALS OF
RESPIRATORY
CARE

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13th EDITION

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EGAN'S

FUNDAMENTALS OF

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We want to acknowledge and dedicate the book to the memory of Bob Kacmarek, PhD, RRT, FAARC. Bob served as a co-editor of the 9th through 12th editions of *Egan's Fundamentals of Respiratory Care* and is indisputably a legend in respiratory care. His wisdom and unique ability to synthesize complex information is amply reflected in prior editions of *Egan's* and carries over into the current 13th edition. To acknowledge this, even though Bob's untimely passing predated writing the current edition, his seminal contributions to multiple chapters will continue to be recognized by including his name as a co-author on chapters to which he materially contributed in the prior 12th edition.

Bob's contributions to respiratory care are countless and immeasurably impactful, perhaps singularly so in a field replete with brilliant contributions over decades. He is only one of four individuals ever to be invited to deliver both the Philip Kittredge Memorial Lecture in 1991 (when it was called the Program Committee Lecture) and, befitting his commitment to this book over many years, the Donald F. Egan Memorial Lecture in 2010. He was also one of only 44 people to receive the AARC's highest award, the Jimmy A. Young medal, in 2008. Bob's native inquisitiveness and rigor spawned multiple insights that affect everyday respiratory care practice, especially regarding mechanical ventilation. Going beyond his amazing intellectual and pedagogic gifts, Bob was a dear friend and someone who made you better by knowing him.

Jamie Stoller first met Bob during his critical care training at the Massachusetts General Hospital, when Bob was relatively newly minted as the director of respiratory care. That friendship prompted many collaborations and other books (e.g., *Monitoring in Respiratory Care*, published in 1993). Beyond any academic collaborations, Bob's friendship and mentorship spurred Jamie's early passion for respiratory care, which certainly contributed to his being invited to serve as a co-editor of *Egan's* starting with the 7th edition.

Bob's footprint in respiratory care was immense and naturally attracted the talent of those keen to collaborate with such a luminary.

Al Heuer has been a long-time chapter contributor for *Egan's* but was invited to join as a co-editor beginning with the 10th edition. Since then, Al co-authored a peer-reviewed manuscript with Bob and worked with him mentoring graduate students mainly on projects related to mechanical ventilation. Bob has been one of the most dominant, positive influence on Al's development as a respiratory care educator and scholar.

Eduardo Mireles-Cabodevila, who newly joins as a co-editor on this 13th edition, collaborated with Bob in co-authoring research on APRV for ARDS. Rob Chatburn collaborated with Bob on the editorial board for the *Respiratory Care* journal and has authored many chapters in books that Bob edited; like the others, he has been a longtime friend and colleague spanning four decades. David Vines contributed book chapters that he also edited, but Bob's shared wisdom, advice, and intellectual discussions have left an indelible impression.

Bob's untimely passing has left a huge void in the field of respiratory care and our hearts. His work lives on in these pages, which carry forward his mission of educating respiratory therapists to offer superb care in an evidence-based manner. We miss and salute you, our friend, and take solace in knowing that you live on in this work and its influence on the lives of many caregivers and patients alike.



My deepest gratitude goes to my wife, Terry, for her tireless love and support that is the bedrock upon which my work has always happened, and to the rest of my family—my son, Jake, daughter-in-law, Abigail, and grandson, Willy—who are the why. I offer deep thanks to my able and loyal assistant, Maria Hernandez, who has organized and bound the collaboration that has made this book possible. Finally, I dedicate this work to the thousands of respiratory care providers who bring the knowledge herein to the bedside in service of so many patients' care and well-being.

JKS

I dedicate my work on this textbook to my wife, Laurel, as well as my family and close friends who I love deeply and who make me feel loved despite my periodic absences while working on such projects; to the Egan's editorial team—Jamie, David, Rob, and Eduardo—who are giants in the profession of respiratory care and with whom I am both humbled and privileged to work; and to my faculty and clinical colleagues, who provide me with much of the inspiration to strive for excellence in teaching, scholarship, and patient care.

AJH

I offer my most profound gratitude to my daughters, Maya and Kendra, whose unfaltering love and support have helped me sustain the effort required to succeed professionally. I dedicate my portion of this work to all those who have the wisdom to be what they want to see.

RLC

To Marina, my sunlight. To Montse, Santi, and Ramon, a constant source of love, joy, and pride. To Mario, an amazing physician who taught me that persistence and creativity always deliver. To Cristi, whose never-ending energy and passion for helping anyone make this world better. To Rob and Jamie for being kind critics, endless collaborators, and virtuous mentors. Finally, to all the healthcare workers who work to keep or make us healthy.

EMC

To my beautiful wife, Edita, your love and support are appreciated beyond what words can say and make everything possible. To my children, Adele, Isabella, and Jackson, your love and insights keep me grounded. I am eternally grateful to my colleagues who provide collaboration and drive to achieve more. Finally, to the other *Egan's* editors and contributors, your shared knowledge and expertise are humbling and inspiring.

DLV

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Donald F. Egan, MD, the original author of *Egan's Fundamentals of Respiratory Care*, sought to provide a foundation of knowledge for respiratory therapy students learning the practice in 1969. However, the scope of the respiratory care profession is ever-expanding, and the skills and information needed to be an effective respiratory therapist have grown with it. With improved technology as well as vast scientific and medical advances, the body of knowledge required for respiratory therapists has increased greatly since the first edition of the text was published.

Now in its thirteenth edition, *Egan's Fundamentals of Respiratory Care* encompasses the most relevant information to date and has provided a comprehensive knowledge base for students and professionals for more than 50 years. While these updated editions of *Egan's Fundamentals of Respiratory Care* still accomplish Dr. Egan's original goal—"to present what is felt to be the minimum knowledge for the safe and effective administration of inhalation therapy"—this text also goes far beyond the minimum requisite knowledge, developing important concepts and providing detailed information and resources to enhance student comprehension.

Every editor and contributor to the book is a leading figure in respiratory care, and the vast experience of these individuals ensures that critical content is covered accurately. Using the combined knowledge of these individuals and the book's many authoritative contributors, *Egan's Fundamentals of Respiratory Care* covers the role of respiratory therapists, the scientific bases for treatment, and clinical application skills. With 58 detailed chapters, each focused on a unique aspect of respiratory care, *Egan's Fundamentals of Respiratory Care* is without equal in providing the prerequisite information required of a respiratory therapist today.

ORGANIZATION

This edition of the text is organized in a logical sequence of sections and chapters that build on each other to facilitate comprehension of the material. The earlier sections provide a basis for the profession and cover the physical, anatomic, and physiologic principles necessary to understand succeeding chapters. The middle portion of the textbook addresses specific cardiopulmonary diseases and conditions, followed by chapters that detail diagnostic and therapeutic techniques deemed essential for the practice of state-of-the-art respiratory care. Key information on patient and family education, disease prevention and management, and alternate sites of care, as well as ethics and end-of-life, are also provided in the later chapters. In order of presentation, the seven sections are:

- I. Foundations of Respiratory Care
- II. Applied Anatomy and Physiology
- III. Assessment of Respiratory Disorders

- IV. Review of Cardiopulmonary Disease
- V. Basic Therapeutics
- VI. Acute and Critical Care
- VII. Patient Education and Long-Term Care

FEATURES

The book has many characteristic features designed with the student in mind, making *Egan's Fundamentals of Respiratory Care* unique and engaging as a primary textbook. Each chapter begins in a similar manner, outlining the content and drawing attention to what should be mastered through the use of:

- Chapter Objectives
- Chapter Outlines
- Key Terms

The most important features within each chapter are accented by the ample use of figures, boxes, and tables containing key information and by the use of:

- "Rules of Thumb"—"pearls" of information highlighting rules, formulas, and key points necessary to the study of respiratory therapy and to future clinical practice
- "Mini-Clinis"—critical thinking case studies illustrating potential problems that may be encountered during patient care
- Therapist-Driven Protocols—examples of decision trees developed by hospitals and used by respiratory therapists to assess patients, initiate care, and evaluate outcomes

Also, each chapter concludes with:

- A "Summary Checklist" of key points that the student should have mastered on completion of the chapter (eBook version)
- A list of the most relevant references

NEW TO THIS EDITION

- Returning as textbook co-editor is world-renowned James K. Stoller, MD, MS, of the Cleveland Clinic, who has co-edited six editions of this textbook and is credited with the tradition of quality associated with this textbook. Also returning as co-editor is Albert Heuer, RRT, PhD, of Rutgers University and a long-time respiratory care educator and scholar, who has worked closely with Dr. Stoller over several editions to ensure the success of the *Egan's* textbook. In addition, long-standing contributors from the Cleveland Clinic, now joining the *Egan's* editorial team as co-editors, are Robert L. Chatburn, RRT, MS, a pioneer in respiratory care simulations and education, and Eduardo Mireles-Cabodevila, MD, a consummate clinician educator and Director of the Medical Intensive Care Unit and Simulation Center at the Cleveland Clinic. Also elevated to co-editor is David L. Vines, RRT, PhD, of Rush University Medical Center and long-time

respiratory care educator and clinician, as well as a board member and former National Board for Respiratory Care (NBRC) president. This editorial team is one of the strongest in *Egan's* history, and the readers will benefit from their ability to recruit talented contributors and assemble a well-researched, comprehensive, and clearly written textbook, still regarded as the single best source in respiratory care education.

- This edition has been updated to reflect the most current information in the National Board for Respiratory Care (NBRC) Therapist Exam Content Outline. Also featured is an expanded role for the NBRC Exam Matrix Correlation chart within all student and instructor offerings.
- Many chapters, including those related to disease management, airway pharmacology, emergency life support, invasive and noninvasive mechanical ventilation, and extracorporeal life support, have been substantially revised or completely rewritten to reflect the dynamic and expanding field of respiratory care.
- The content of the entire text has been refined and simplified to be more easily understood and relevant to our key audiences: respiratory therapy students, faculty, and therapists worldwide.

LEARNING AIDS

Workbook and Evolve Resources

In addition to the previously described digital resources associated with each chapter in this textbook, The *Workbook for Egan's Fundamentals of Respiratory Care* is another exceptional resource for students. Offering a wide range of activities, it allows students to apply the knowledge they have gained using the core text. Presented in an engaging format, the workbook breaks down difficult concepts and guides students through the

most important information. Beyond the many NBRC-style multiple-choice questions in the workbook, students can access animations, an English/Spanish glossary, student lecture notes, Chapter Summary Checklists, and Body Spectrum, an anatomy coloring book.

Answers to the *Workbook* are available on the Evolve site. Evolve also includes animations, English/Spanish Glossary, Student Lecture Notes, and Body Spectrum Anatomy Coloring Book.

FOR THE INSTRUCTOR

Evolve Resources

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SECTION I Foundations of Respiratory Care

1 Early History of Respiratory Care, 1

James K. Stoller and Albert J. Heuer

- Definitions, 2
- History of Respiratory Medicine and Science, 2
 - Ancient Times, 2*
 - The Middle Ages, Renaissance, and Enlightenment Period, 2*
 - Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries, 4*
- Development of the Respiratory Care Profession, 5
 - Clinical Advances in Respiratory Care, 5*
- Professional Organizations and Events, 10
 - American Association for Respiratory Care, 10*
 - Respiratory Care Week, 11*
 - Board of Medical Advisors, 11*
 - American Respiratory Care Foundation, 11*
 - International Council for Respiratory Care, 11*
 - National Board for Respiratory Care, 11*
- National Board for Respiratory Care, 12
 - Committee on Accreditation for Respiratory Care, 12*
- Respiratory Care Education, 12
- References, 13

2 The Profession of Respiratory Care, 15

Brian K. Walsh

- Introduction, 16
- Scope of Respiratory Care Practice Today, 16
- Practice Settings, 16
- Respiratory Therapy Department Composition, 16
 - Department Director, 17*
 - Educational Coordinator, 17*
 - Quality Assurance Coordinator, 17*
 - Researcher/Scientist, 18*
 - Supervisors/Lead Therapists, 18*
 - Respiratory Therapists, 18*
 - Medical Director, 18*
- Designations and Credentials of Respiratory Therapists, 19
- Professional Respiratory Care Organizations Today, 19
 - American Association for Respiratory Care, 20*
 - National Board for Respiratory Care, 20*
 - Commission on Accreditation for Respiratory Care, 21*
 - American Respiratory Care Foundation, 21*
 - Coalition for Baccalaureate and Graduate Respiratory Therapy Education, 21*
 - International Council for Respiratory Care, 22*
- Other Organizations Affecting Respiratory Care, 22
 - Joint Commission, 22*
 - Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, 22*
 - Association for the Advancement of Medical Instrumentation, 22*
- Respiratory Therapy Education, 23
 - Degree Advancement Programs, 23*
- State Licensure, 24
- Professionalism, 24

The Future of Respiratory Care, 24

- Pulmonary Disease Manager, 25*
- Advance Practice Respiratory Therapist, 26*

References, 26

3 Quality, Patient Safety, and Communication, 27

Scott P. Marlow and Umur Hatipoğlu

- Quality Considerations, 28
 - What Is Quality of Medical Care?, 28*
 - Methods of Quality Improvement, 28*
 - Plan-Do-Study-Act Cycle, 29*
 - Six Sigma, 30*
 - Lean Management, 30*
 - The Evolution of Quality in Healthcare in the United States, 30*
 - Monitoring Quality in Respiratory Care, 32*
 - Peer Review Organizations, 34*
- Safety Considerations, 34
 - Patient Movement and Ambulation, 34*
 - Electrical Safety, 36*
 - Fire Hazards, 39*
 - General Safety Concerns, 39*
- Communication, 40
 - Communication in Healthcare, 40*
 - Factors Affecting Communication, 41*
 - Improving Communication Skills, 42*
- Conflict and Conflict Resolution, 44
 - Sources of Conflict, 44*
 - Conflict Resolution, 44*
- References, 45

4 Principles of Infection Prevention and Control, 46

Michele Messam and Thomas G. Fraser

- Spread of Infection, 47
 - Sources of Infectious Agents, 47*
 - Susceptible Hosts, 47*
 - Modes of Transmission, 47*
- Strategies for the Prevention of Infection, 49
 - Creating a Safe Culture, 49*
 - Maintaining a Healthy Workforce, 49*
 - Eliminating the Source of Pathogens, 49*
 - Interrupting Transmission, 50*
 - Standard Precautions, 50*
 - Hand Hygiene, 50*
 - Gloves, 50*
 - Mouth, Nose, Eye, and Face Protection, 51*
 - Respiratory Protection, 51*
 - Gowns, Aprons, and Protective Apparel, 52*
 - Cough Etiquette and Wearing a Source Control Mask, 53*
 - Transmission-Based Precautions, 54*
 - Protective Environment, 55*
 - Transport of Infected Patients, 55*
 - Medical Devices and Bundles, 56*
- Disinfection and Sterilization, 56
 - The Spaulding Approach to Disinfection and Sterilization of Patient Care Equipment, 56*
 - Cleaning, 57*
 - Disinfection, 58*

- Sterilization, 58
 - Equipment-Handling Procedures, 58
 - Maintenance of In-Use Equipment, 58
 - Reprocessing Reusable Equipment, 60
 - Disposable Equipment, 61
 - Fluid and Medication Precautions, 61
 - Handling Contaminated Articles and Equipment, 61
 - Handling Laboratory Specimens, 62
 - Surveillance for Hospital-Acquired Infections, 62
 - References, 63
- 5 Ethical and Legal Implications of Practice, 65**
Anthony L. DeWitt
 - Philosophical Foundations of Ethics, 66
 - Ethical Dilemmas of Practice, 66
 - Codes of Ethics, 67
 - Ethical Theories and Principles, 68
 - Autonomy, 68
 - Veracity, 68
 - Nonmaleficence, 69
 - Beneficence, 69
 - Confidentiality, 70
 - Justice, 71
 - Role Duty, 71
 - Ethical Viewpoints and Decision-Making, 72
 - Formalism, 73
 - Consequentialism, 73
 - Mixed Approaches, 73
 - Virtue Ethics, 73
 - Intuitionism, 74
 - Comprehensive Decision-Making Models, 74
 - Legal Issues Affecting Respiratory Care, 75
 - Systems of Law, 75
 - Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996, 79
 - Medical Supervision, 80
 - Interaction of Ethics and the Law, 81
 - Professional Licensure Issues, 81
 - Licensure Statute, 81
 - Understanding the Causes of Discipline, 81
 - Engaging Counsel, 81
 - Respiratory Therapists Who Speak Out About Wrongdoing, 82
 - Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, 82
 - National Labor Relations Act, 82
 - False Claims Act, 82
 - Healthcare and Change, 82
 - Healthcare Advance Directives, 83
 - References, 83
- 6 Physical Principles of Respiratory Care, 84**
Robert Chatburn
 - States of Matter, 85
 - Internal Energy of Matter, 85
 - Laws of Thermodynamics, 85
 - Change of State, 88
 - Liquid-Solid Phase Changes (Melting and Freezing), 88
 - Properties of Liquids, 89
 - Liquid-Vapor Phase Changes, 93
 - Properties of Gases, 96
 - Gas Behavior Under Changing Conditions, 101
 - Gas Laws, 101
 - Effect of Water Vapor, 102
 - Properties of Gases at Extremes of Temperature and Pressure, 103
 - Critical Temperature and Pressure, 103
 - Fluid Dynamics, 104
 - Pressures in Flowing Fluids, 104
 - Patterns of Flow, 104
 - Flow, Velocity, and Cross-Sectional Area, 106
 - Bernoulli Principle, 106
 - Fluid Entrainment, 107
 - Fluidics and the Coanda Effect, 107
 - References, 108
- 7 E-Medicine in Respiratory Care, 109**
Albert J. Heuer
 - The Electronic Health Record and the Electronic Medical Record, 110
 - Computerized Physician Order Entry, 110
 - Enterprise Software Packages, 111
 - Applications for Patient Care, 112
 - Applications in Diagnostics, 112
 - Applications in Treatment, 114
 - Applications in Disease and Infection Prevention, 115
 - Informatics and Clinical Decision Support, 117
 - Business Intelligence, 117
 - Clinical Decision Support, 117
 - American Association for Respiratory Care Benchmarking System, 118
 - Research, 118
 - Telehealth and Telemonitoring, 119
 - Sources of Health Information, 119
 - Health Information Sources for Respiratory Therapists and Other Clinicians, 119
 - Health Information Sources for Consumers, 119
 - Applications in Healthcare Administration, 120
 - Documentation, Workload, Staffing, and Scheduling, 120
 - Financial Management, 121
 - Quality Assurance, 122
 - Regulatory Compliance, 122
 - Web Analytics, 122
 - Human Resources, 122
 - Privacy and Confidentiality, 122
 - Applications in Training and Education, 123
 - Clinical Simulations, 123
 - Full-Scale and Other Physiologic Clinical Simulators, 123
 - Clinical Education Applications, 124
 - National Board for Respiratory Care Credentialing, 124
 - Learning Management Systems, 126
 - Future of E-medicine, 126
 - References, 127
- 8 Fundamentals of Respiratory Care Research, 129**
Robert L. Chatburn
 - Overview of Respiratory Care Research, 129
 - The Importance of Research in Healthcare, 130
 - How to Review and Evaluate the Literature, 130
 - Bibliographic Databases, 130
 - Synthesized Databases, 130
 - Portals, 130
 - Electronic Journals and Books, 130
 - General Internet Resources, 131
 - Suggestions for Conducting Searches, 131

- Evaluating the Quality of Research, 131
 - Evidence-Based Medicine*, 131
- How to Begin Doing Research, 134
 - How to Develop a Study Idea*, 134
 - Key Roles in Research*, 136
 - How to Write a Study Protocol*, 136
 - How to Analyze the Data*, 136
- How to Submit a Paper for Publication, 138
 - How to Write the Abstract*, 138
 - How to Make a Poster*, 138
 - How to Write a Paper*, 140
 - How to Respond to Reviews*, 142
- Summary, 143
- References, 143

SECTION II Applied Anatomy and Physiology

9 The Respiratory System, 145

Narciso E. Rodriguez

- Development of the Respiratory System, 147
- Transition From Uterine to Extrauterine Life, 151
 - Placental Structure and Function*, 151
 - Fetal Circulation*, 153
 - Cardiopulmonary Events at Birth*, 153
- Postnatal Lung Development, 155
 - Upper Airway*, 155
 - Lower Airway and Alveoli*, 156
 - Development of Vascular, Lymphatic, and Nervous Systems*, 157
 - Chest Wall Development, Diaphragm, and Lung Volume*, 158
- Respiratory System in the Adult, 159
 - Surface Features of the Thorax*, 159
 - Components of the Thoracic Wall*, 160
 - Respiratory Muscles*, 163
 - Pleural Membranes, Space, and Fluid*, 169
 - Mediastinum*, 170
 - Lungs*, 170
- Anatomy of the Respiratory Tract, 172
 - Upper Respiratory Tract*, 172
 - Lower Respiratory Tract*, 177
- Pulmonary Vascular, Lymphatic, and Nervous Systems, 188
 - Pulmonary Circulation*, 188
 - Bronchial Circulation*, 193
 - Lymphatics*, 194
 - Neural Control of the Lungs*, 195
 - Efferent Pathways*, 196
 - Afferent Pathways*, 198
- References, 198

10 The Cardiovascular System, 201

Narciso E. Rodriguez

- Functional Anatomy, 202
 - Heart*, 202
 - Vascular System*, 207
- Control of the Cardiovascular System, 210
 - Regulation of Peripheral Vasculature*, 210
 - Regulation of Cardiac Output*, 211
- Cardiovascular Control Mechanisms, 214
- Events of the Cardiac Cycle, 217

- References, 220
- Bibliography, 220

11 Ventilation, 221

Lokesh Venkateshiah, Zachary Jerusalem, and Eduardo Mireles-Cabodevila

- Mechanics of Ventilation, 222
 - Pressure Differences During Breathing*, 222
 - Forces Opposing Inflation of the Lung*, 224
- Static Versus Dynamic Mechanics, 230
- Mechanics of Exhalation, 231
- Work of Breathing, 232
 - Mechanical Work*, 232
 - Metabolic Work*, 233
- Distribution of Ventilation, 234
 - Regional Factors Affecting Distribution*, 234
 - Local Factors Affecting Distribution*, 236
- Efficiency and Effectiveness of Ventilation, 238
 - Efficiency*, 238
 - Effectiveness of Ventilation*, 241
- References, 241

12 Gas Exchange and Transport, 242

Zaza Cohen

- Diffusion, 243
 - Whole-Body Diffusion Gradients*, 243
 - Determinants of Alveolar Gas Tensions*, 243
 - Mechanism of Diffusion*, 244
- Variations From Ideal Gas Exchange, 246
 - Anatomic Shunts*, 246
 - Inequalities in Ventilation and Perfusion*, 246
- Oxygen Transport, 248
 - Chemically Combined Oxygen (Oxyhemoglobin)*, 248
 - Total Oxygen Content of the Blood*, 250
 - Normal Loading and Unloading of Oxygen (Arteriovenous Differences)*, 251
 - Factors Affecting Oxygen Loading and Unloading*, 251
- Carbon Dioxide Transport, 255
 - Transport Mechanisms*, 255
 - Carbon Dioxide Dissociation Curve*, 256
- Abnormalities of Gas Exchange and Transport, 257
 - Impaired Oxygen Delivery*, 257
 - Dyoxia*, 260
 - Impaired Carbon Dioxide Removal*, 261
- References, 262

13 Solutions, Body Fluids, and Electrolytes, 263

Rishi Mehta, Jeffrey Bulger, and Amira Elshikh

- Solutions, Colloids, and Suspensions, 264
 - Definition of a Solution*, 264
 - Concentration of Solutions*, 265
 - Starling Forces*, 265
 - Osmotic Pressure of Solutions*, 266
 - Quantifying Solute Content and Activity*, 267
 - Solute Content by Weight*, 268
 - Calculating Solute Content*, 268
 - Quantitative Classification of Solutions*, 268
- Electrolytic Activity and Acid-Base Balance, 269
 - Characteristics of Acids, Bases, and Salts*, 269
 - Designation of Acidity and Alkalinity*, 271
- Body Fluids and Electrolytes, 272
 - Body Water*, 272
 - Electrolytes*, 275
- References, 278

14 Acid-Base Balance, 279

Sara Hanif Mirza

- Hydrogen Ion Regulation in Body Fluids, 280**
 - Strong and Weak Acids and Bases: Equilibrium Constants, 280*
 - Buffer Solution Characteristics, 281*
 - Bicarbonate and Nonbicarbonate Buffer Systems, 281*
 - pH of a Buffer System: Henderson-Hasselbalch Equation, 282*
 - Physiologic Roles of Bicarbonate and Nonbicarbonate Buffer Systems, 283*

Acid Excretion, 284

- Lungs, 284*
- Kidneys, 284*

Acid-Base Disturbances, 287

- Normal Acid-Base Balance, 287*
- Primary Respiratory Disturbances, 289*
- Primary Metabolic (Nonrespiratory) Disturbances, 289*
- Compensation: Restoring pH to Normal, 289*

Clinical Acid-Base States, 290

- Systematic Acid-Base Classification, 290*
- Respiratory Acidosis, 292*
- Respiratory Alkalosis, 294*
- Metabolic (Nonrespiratory) Acidosis, 295*
- Metabolic Alkalosis, 297*
- Metabolic Acid-Base Indicators, 299*
- Mixed Acid-Base States, 300*

References, 301**15 Regulation of Breathing, 302**

S. Gregory Marshall

Medullary Respiratory Center, 303

- Dorsal Respiratory Groups, 303*
- Ventral Respiratory Groups, 303*
- Inspiratory Ramp Signal, 303*

Pontine Respiratory Centers, 304

- Apneustic Center, 304*
- Pneumotaxic Center, 304*

Reflex Control of Breathing, 304

- Hering-Breuer Inflation Reflex, 304*
- Deflation Reflex, 304*
- Head Paradoxical Reflex, 304*
- Irritant Receptors, 304*
- J-Receptors, 305*
- Peripheral Proprioceptors, 305*
- Muscle Spindles, 305*

Chemical Control of Breathing, 305

- Central Chemoreceptors, 305*
- Peripheral Chemoreceptors, 306*
- Control of Breathing in Chronic Hypercapnia, 307*
- Oxygen-Associated Hypercapnia, 308*

Ventilatory Response to Exercise, 309**Carbon Dioxide and Cerebral Blood Flow, 309****References, 310**

- Principles of Interviewing, 313*
- Common Cardiopulmonary Symptoms, 314*
- The Medical Record and Medical History, 318*

Physical Examination, 320

- General Appearance, 320*
- Level of Consciousness, 320*
- Vital Signs, 321*
- Body Temperature, 321*
- Pulse Rate, 321*
- Respiratory Rate, 322*
- Arterial Blood Pressure, 322*
- Examination of the Head and Neck, 323*
- Examination of the Thorax and Lungs, 324*
- Cardiac Examination, 331*
- Abdominal Examination, 332*
- Examination of the Extremities, 333*

References, 334**Bibliography, 335****17 Interpreting Clinical and Laboratory Data, 336**

Elizabeth S. Tetteh

Interpreting Clinical Laboratory Tests, 336

- Introduction to Laboratory Medicine, 337*
- Complete Blood Count, 337*
- Electrolyte Tests, 339*
- Enzyme Tests, 341*
- Coagulation Studies, 343*
- Microbiology Tests, 344**
- Sputum Gram Stain, 344*
- Viral Testing, 344**
- Sweat Test, 344*

Clinical Application of Laboratory Data, 345

- Coagulation Disorders, 345*
- Electrolyte Disorders and Conclusion, 345*

References, 345**18 Interpreting the Electrocardiogram, 346**

Albert J. Heuer

Basic Principles of Electrophysiology, 347

- Impulse-Conducting System, 347*
- Electrocardiogram Procedural Summary, 348**
- Basic Electrocardiographic Waves, 349*
- Interpreting the Electrocardiogram, 351*
- Pulseless Electrical Activity, 358*
- Common Arrhythmias, Features, Causes, and Treatment, 358*
- Wearables and Remote Monitoring, 360*

References, 360**19 Analysis and Monitoring of Gas Exchange, 361**

Hameeda Shaikh, Stephen Littleton, and Franco Laghi

Invasive Versus Noninvasive Procedures, 362**Monitoring Fractional Inspired Oxygen, 362**

- Instrumentation, 362*
- Procedure, 362*
- Problem Solving and Troubleshooting, 363*
- Sampling Blood Gases, 363*
- Analyzing Blood Gas Samples, 368*

Blood Gas Monitoring, 373

- Transcutaneous Blood Gas Monitoring, 373*
- Direct Measurement of Tissue Oxygen, 374*

Oximetry, 375

- Methemoglobin, 375*
- Carboxyhemoglobin, 376*
- Hemoximetry, 376*

SECTION III Assessment of Respiratory Disorders**16 Bedside Assessment of the Patient, 311**

Albert J. Heuer

- Interviewing the Patient, Obtaining a Medical History, and Reviewing the Medical Record, 313**

- Pulse Oximetry*, 377
- Venous Oximetry*, 380
- Noninvasive Tissue Oximetry*, 381
- Capnometry and Capnography**, 381
 - Indications*, 382
 - Instrumentation*, 382
 - Procedure*, 388
 - Problem Solving and Troubleshooting*, 388
- References**, 388
- 20 Pulmonary Function Testing**, 390
 - Zaza Cohen*
 - Pulmonary Function Testing**, 391
 - Purposes*, 391
 - Pathophysiologic Patterns*, 392
 - Infection Control*, 393
 - Equipment*, 393
 - Reference Values and Interpretation of Results**, 394
 - Principles of Measurement and Significance**, 395
 - Individual Tests and Measurements**, 396
 - Spirometry*, 396
 - Lung Volumes and Capacities*, 402
 - Diffusing Capacity*, 408
 - Interpretation of the Pulmonary Function Report**, 410
 - Sample Pulmonary Function Test Reports and Interpretation*, 412
 - Solution 2*, 412
 - Solution Report 3*, 412
 - Solution Report 4*, 413
 - References**, 413
- 21 Review of Thoracic Imaging**, 414
 - Joseph Thomas Azok and James K. Stoller*
 - Overview of the Chest X-Ray**, 415
 - Approach to Reading a Plain Chest X-Ray*, 415
 - Chest X-Ray Technique and Quality*, 417
 - Anatomic Structures Seen on a Chest X-Ray*, 418
 - Advanced Chest Imaging Techniques*, 420
 - Pleura**, 424
 - Pleural Effusion*, 424
 - Pneumothorax*, 426
 - Lung Parenchyma**, 428
 - Alveolar Disease*, 428
 - Pulmonary Edema*, 429
 - Interstitial Disease*, 431
 - Assessing Lung Volume*, 431
 - Solitary Pulmonary Nodule*, 434
 - Mediastinum**, 437
 - Pneumomediastinum*, 437
 - Catheters, Lines, and Tubes*, 437
 - References**, 441
- 22 Flexible Bronchoscopy and the Respiratory Therapist**, 443
 - Danai Khemasuwan and Atul C. Mehta*
 - Rigid Bronchoscopy**, 444
 - Flexible Bronchoscopy**, 444
 - Procedure, Sedation, and Monitoring*, 445
 - Diagnostic Bronchoscopy**, 448
 - Bronchoalveolar Lavage*, 448
 - Bronchial Washings*, 449
 - Bronchial Brushings*, 450
 - Endobronchial Biopsy*, 450
 - Transbronchial Biopsy*, 450
 - Transbronchial Needle Aspiration: Conventional and Ultrasound-Guided Procedures*, 451
 - Electromagnetic Navigational Bronchoscopy*, 452
 - Ultrathin Bronchoscopy*, 453
 - Narrow-Band Imaging*, 454
 - Therapeutic Bronchoscopy**, 454
 - Thermal Ablation of the Endobronchial Lesion*, 454
 - Cryotherapy*, 455
 - Endobronchial Stents*, 455
 - Bronchial Thermoplasty*, 456
 - Bronchoscopic Lung Volume Reduction*, 456
 - Bronchoscopy in Difficult Intubation*, 457
 - The Role of the Respiratory Therapist in Bronchoscopy**, 458
 - Special Considerations for Bronchoscopy During Mechanical Ventilation**, 458
 - Physiologic and Mechanical Alterations Associated With Flexible Bronchoscopy in Intubated Patients**, 459
 - Conclusion**, 461
 - References**, 462
- 23 Nutrition Assessment**, 464
 - Janet Reid-Hector*
 - Nutrition Assessment**, 466
 - Food-Related and Nutrition-Related History*, 466
 - Anthropometrics*, 467
 - Biochemical Indicators*, 468
 - Other Tests and Procedures*, 469
 - Pulmonary Function*, 469
 - Nutrition-Focused Physical Findings*, 470
 - Outcomes of Nutrition Assessment**, 470
 - Macronutrients and Energy Requirements**, 470
 - Estimating Energy Requirements*, 470
 - Indirect Calorimetry*, 471
 - Alternative Resting Energy Expenditure Measures*, 474
 - General Aspects of Nutrition Support**, 475
 - Meeting Overall Energy Needs*, 476
 - Respiratory Consequences of Malnutrition*, 477
 - Providing the Appropriate Combination of Substrates*, 477
 - Routes of Administration**, 478
 - Enteral Feeding*, 478
 - Parenteral Nutrition Support*, 480
 - Nutrition Support in Specific Circumstances**, 481
 - General Guidelines for Critically Ill Patients*, 481
 - Systemic Inflammatory Response Syndrome*, 481
 - Mechanical Ventilation*, 481
 - Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease*, 481
 - Asthma*, 483
 - Cystic Fibrosis*, 483
 - References**, 483

SECTION IV Review of Cardiopulmonary Disease

24 Pneumonia, 485

Marcos I. Restrepo and Matthew Brignon

- Introduction**, 485
- Definitions**, 486
- Pathogenesis**, 486
- Mechanisms**, 486

- Host-Pathogen Interaction, 487
- Clinical Manifestations, 487
- Imaging, 488
- Community-Acquired Pneumonia, 489
 - Epidemiology, 489
 - Microbiology, 489
- Laboratory Diagnosis, 491
- Site-of-Care Decision, 492
- Therapies, 493
- Adjunctive Therapies, 494
- Prevention of Community-Acquired Pneumonia, 495
- Hospital-Acquired Pneumonia/Ventilator-Associated Pneumonia, 495
 - Epidemiology, 495
 - Microbiology, 496
- Therapies, 497
 - Empiric and Specific Antibiotic Therapies, 497
- Adjunctive Therapies, 498
 - Prevention of NVHAP/VAP, 499
- Role of the Respiratory Therapist in Pneumonia Care, 499
- References, 499
- 25 Obstructive Lung Disease: Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD), Asthma, and Related Diseases, 503**
 - Amy Attaway, Umur Hatipoğlu, and James K. Stoller*
 - Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease, 504
 - Overview and Definitions, 504
 - Epidemiology, 504
 - Risk Factors and Pathophysiology, 505
 - Clinical Signs and Symptoms, 506
 - Management, 507
 - Establishing the Diagnosis, 508
 - Optimizing Lung Function, 508
 - Maximizing Functional Status, 509
 - Preventing Progression of Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease and Acute Exacerbations, and Enhancing Survival, 511
 - Additional Therapies, 513
 - Asthma, 514
 - Definition, 514
 - Epidemiology, 514
 - Etiology and Pathogenesis, 514
 - Clinical Presentation and Diagnosis, 515
 - Management, 516
 - Objective Measurement and Monitoring, 517
 - Pharmacotherapy, 518
 - Biologic Therapy, 518
 - Emergency Department and Hospital Management of Asthma, 523
 - Bronchial Thermoplasty, 523
 - Immunotherapy, 524
 - Environmental Control, 524
 - Patient Education, 524
 - Special Considerations in Asthma Management, 524
 - Bronchiectasis, 524
 - Clinical Presentation, 524
 - Evaluation, 526
 - Management, 526
 - Role of the Respiratory Therapist in Obstructive Lung Disease, 527
 - References, 527
- 26 Interstitial Lung Disease, 531**
 - Jeffrey T. Chapman and Adam Bennett*
 - Characteristics of Interstitial Lung Disease, 533
 - Clinical Signs and Symptoms, 533
 - Physical Examination, 533
 - Radiographic Features, 533
 - Physiologic Features, 534
 - Selected Specific Types of Interstitial Lung Disease and Therapies, 534
 - Exposure-Related Disease, 534
 - Interstitial Lung Disease Associated With a Systemic Disease, 538
 - Sarcoidosis, 539
 - Lymphangioleiomyomatosis, 539
 - Interstitial Lung Disease of Unknown Cause, 539
 - Nonspecific Therapies, 540
 - Summary, 540
 - Role of the Respiratory Therapist in Interstitial Lung Disease, 540
 - References, 542
- 27 Pleural Diseases, 544**
 - Joseph Cicenía and See-Wei Low*
 - The Pleural Space, 544
 - Pleural Effusions, 545
 - Transudative Effusions, 546
 - Exudative Effusions, 548
 - Physiologic Importance, 550
 - Diagnostic Tests for a Pleural Effusion, 551
 - Therapy for a Pleural Effusion, 551
 - Pneumothorax, 553
 - Traumatic, 554
 - Spontaneous, 555
 - Complications of Pneumothorax, 556
 - Diagnosis of a Pneumothorax, 556
 - Therapy for a Pneumothorax, 557
 - Bronchopleural Fistula, 558
 - Pleurodesis, 558
 - Role of the Respiratory Therapist in Pleural Diseases, 559
 - References, 559
- 28 Pulmonary Vascular Disease, 561**
 - Adriano R. Tonelli and Raed A. Dweik*
 - Venous Thromboembolic Disease, 561
 - Pathogenesis, 562
 - Pathology, 562
 - Pathophysiology, 562
 - Clinical Features, 563
 - Diagnostic Modalities, 564
 - Risk Assessment, 566
 - Treatment, 567
 - Pulmonary Hypertension, 569
 - Pathogenesis, 570
 - Epidemiology and Clinical Findings, 570
 - Diagnosis, 570
 - Management of Pulmonary Hypertension, 572
 - Pulmonary Hypertension Associated With Lung Disease or Hypoxia, 575
 - Role of the Respiratory Therapist in Pulmonary Vascular Disease, 575
 - References, 575

- 29 Acute Respiratory Distress Syndrome, 581**
Rachel G. Scheraga, Matthew C. Exline, and Robert Duncan Hite
Physiology of Pulmonary Edema, 582
Liquid and Solute Transport in the Lungs, 582
Hydrostatic Versus Non-Hydrostatic Edema, 583
Gas Exchange and Lung Mechanics in Pulmonary Edema, 585
Definition and Diagnosis, 586
Criteria for Clinical Syndrome, 586
Distinguishing Acute Respiratory Distress Syndrome From Hydrostatic Pulmonary Edema in Clinical Practice, 587
Pathophysiology and Histopathologic Findings of Acute Respiratory Distress Syndrome, 587
Risk Factors and Epidemiology, 588
Risk Factors (Triggers) and Host Susceptibility, 588
Epidemiology and Outcomes, 589
Management, 590
Mechanical Ventilation, 590
Noninvasive Approaches to Ventilatory Support, 595
Adjunctive Strategies to Improve Lung Function, 595
Alternative and Rescue Ventilation Strategies, 598
Nonventilatory Supportive Care, 600
Role of the Respiratory Therapist in Acute Respiratory Distress Syndrome, 602
References, 602
- 30 Respiratory Management of Trauma, Obesity, Near Drowning, and Burns, 605**
Massimiliano Pirrone and Lorenzo Berra
Life-Threatening Trauma, 606
Epidemiology, 606
Trauma and the Role of the Respiratory Therapist, 606
Clinical Assessment and Specific Pathophysiologic Concerns, 606
Respiratory Management, 610
Obesity, 610
Epidemiology, 610
Specific Pathophysiologic Concerns, 611
Clinical Assessment, 612
Respiratory Management, 613
Near Drowning, 614
Epidemiology, 614
Specific Pathophysiologic Concerns, 615
Respiratory Management, 615
Airway Clearance Therapy, 615
Mechanical Ventilation, 616
Positioning, 616
Burns, 616
Epidemiology, 616
Clinical Assessment, 616
Pathophysiology of Burn Patients, 618
Specific Concerns, 619
Respiratory Management, 619
References, 620
- 31 Acute Heart Failure, 622**
Ann Gage
Definition, Epidemiology, and Burden of Care, 622
Pathophysiology of Acute Heart Failure, 623
Approach to Patients With Acute Heart Failure, 624
Diagnosis of Acute Heart Failure, 624
History and Physical, 624
Initial Laboratory Testing, 625
Imaging, 625
Electrocardiography, 625
Echocardiography, 625
Coronary Angiography, 626
Cardiac Computed Tomography and Cardiac Magnetic Resonance Imaging, 626
Lung Imaging, 626
Identifying the Cause of Acute Heart Failure, 627
Monitoring in Acute Heart Failure, 627
Treatment for Heart Failure, 627
Pharmacotherapy, 627
Nonpharmacologic Interventions for Acute Heart Failure, 630
Respiratory Support and Monitoring During Acute Heart Failure, 630
Respiratory Pathophysiology of Acute Heart Failure, 630
Ventilatory Support as Part of the Treatment of Right and Left Acute Heart Failure, 632
Titration of Ventilatory Support During Acute Heart Failure, 633
Role of Respiratory Therapist in Managing Acute Heart Failure, 634
References, 634
- 32 Lung Cancer, 637**
Peter J. Mazzone and Hilary B. Petersen
Epidemiology, 638
New Cases, 638
Deaths, 638
Risk Factors, 638
Classification, 639
Pathophysiology, 640
Clinical Features, 640
Diagnosis, 641
Staging, 643
Preoperative Evaluation for Lung Resection Surgery, 644
Prevention, 647
Screening for Lung Cancer, 647
Tobacco Cessation, 648
Treatment and Outcomes, 648
Non–Small Cell Lung Cancer, 648
Small Cell Lung Cancer, 650
Future Scenario, 650
Role of the Respiratory Therapist in Managing Patients With Lung Cancer, 650
References, 651
- 33 Neuromuscular and Other Diseases of the Chest Wall, 652**
Apama Bhat, Ahmed Hussein, and Rendell W. Ashton
General Principles Related to Neuromuscular Weakness of the Ventilatory Muscles, 652
Pathophysiology and Pulmonary Function Testing, 653
Clinical Signs and Symptoms, 655
Monitoring and Assessing Patients With Neuromuscular Respiratory Weakness, 655
Management of Ventilation in Respiratory Muscle Weakness, 657
Specific Neuromuscular Diseases, 659
Disorders of the Muscle, 659
Disorders of the Neuromuscular Junction, 660

- Disorders of the Nerves*, 662
- Disorders of the Spinal Cord*, 664
- Acute Brain Injury*, 666
- Disorders of the Thoracic Cage**, 667
 - Kyphoscoliosis*, 667
 - Ankylosing Spondylitis*, 667
- The Role of the Respiratory Therapist in Caring for Patients With Neuromuscular Weakness and Other Diseases of the Chest Wall**, 667
 - References, 668
- 34 Disorders of Sleep**, 671
 - Aparna Bhat and Jessica Vensel Rundo*
 - Pathophysiology**, 672
 - Obstructive Sleep Apnea*, 672
 - Central Sleep Apnea*, 673
 - Overlap Syndrome*, 673
 - Hypoventilation Syndromes*, 673
 - Clinical Features**, 673
 - Screening Questionnaires**, 674
 - Laboratory Testing**, 674
 - Treatment**, 675
 - Behavioral Interventions and Risk Counseling*, 675
 - Positional Therapy*, 675
 - Medical Interventions*, 676
 - Oral Appliance Therapy*, 678
 - Surgical Interventions*, 678
 - Additional Therapies*, 680
 - Medications*, 681
 - Role of the Respiratory Therapist in Disorders of Sleep**, 681
 - References, 681
- 35 Neonatal and Pediatric Respiratory Disorders**, 685
 - Narciso E. Rodriguez*
 - Neonatal Respiratory Disorders**, 686
 - Lung Parenchymal Diseases*, 686
 - Control of Breathing Disorders*, 695
 - Pulmonary Vascular Disease*, 697
 - Congenital Abnormalities Affecting Respiration*, 698
 - Critical Congenital Heart Disease*, 702
 - Older Infant and Pediatric Respiratory Disorders**, 707
 - Sudden Infant Death Syndrome*, 707
 - Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease*, 709
 - Bronchiolitis*, 709
 - Croup*, 710
 - Epiglottitis*, 711
 - Cystic Fibrosis*, 712
 - Role of the Respiratory Therapist in Neonatal and Pediatric Respiratory Disorders**, 715
 - References, 715
- 36 Airway Pharmacology**, 720
 - Douglas S. Gardenhire*
 - Principles of Pharmacology**, 721
 - Drug Administration Phase*, 721
 - Pharmacokinetic Phase*, 721
 - Pharmacodynamic Phase*, 721
 - Airway Receptors and Neural Control of the Lung*, 721
 - Adrenergic Bronchodilators**, 722
 - Indications for Use*, 722
 - Mechanism of Action and Effects*, 724
 - Adrenergic Bronchodilator Agents*, 724
 - Adverse Effects*, 725
 - Assessment of Bronchodilator Therapy*, 726
 - Anticholinergic Bronchodilators**, 727
 - Indications for Use*, 727
 - Mechanism of Action*, 728
 - Adverse Effects*, 728
 - Assessment*, 729
 - Mucus-Controlling Agents**, 729
 - N-Acetyl Cysteine*, 729
 - Dornase Alfa*, 730
 - Other Mucoactive Agents*, 730
 - Assessment of Mucoactive Drug Therapy*, 731
 - Inhaled Corticosteroids**, 732
 - Indications and Purposes*, 732
 - Mechanism of Action*, 733
 - Adverse Effects*, 733
 - Special Considerations*, 733
 - Assessment of Drug Therapy*, 733
 - Nonsteroidal Antiasthma Drugs**, 734
 - Indication for Use*, 735
 - Mechanism of Action*, 735
 - Adverse Effects*, 736
 - Assessment of Drug Therapy*, 736
 - Aerosolized Antiinfective Agents**, 737
 - Pentamidine Isethionate*, 737
 - Ribavirin*, 737
 - Adverse Effects*, 738
 - Assessment*, 738
 - Inhaled Tobramycin*, 738
 - Inhaled Aztreonam*, 739
 - Colistimethate Sodium*, 739
 - Inhaled Zanamivir*, 739
 - Inhaled Pulmonary Vasodilators**, 740
 - Nitric Oxide*, 740
 - Iloprost*, 740
 - Treprostinil*, 740
 - References, 740
- 37 Airway Management**, 742
 - J. Brady Scott*
 - Suctioning**, 743
 - Endotracheal Suctioning*, 743
 - Nasotracheal Suctioning*, 746
 - Sputum Sampling*, 747
 - Establishing an Artificial Airway**, 748
 - Routes*, 748
 - Artificial Airways*, 748
 - Surgical Emergency Airways*, 753
 - Procedures*, 755
 - Laryngectomy*, 763
 - Airway Trauma Associated With Tracheal Tubes**, 764
 - Laryngeal Lesions*, 764
 - Tracheal Lesions*, 764
 - Prevention*, 765
 - Airway Maintenance**, 766
 - Securing the Airway and Confirming Placement*, 766
 - Providing for Patient Communication*, 767
 - Ensuring Adequate Humidification*, 769
 - Minimizing Nosocomial Infections*, 769

SECTION V Basic Therapeutics

36 Airway Pharmacology, 720

Douglas S. Gardenhire

Principles of Pharmacology, 721

Drug Administration Phase, 721

Pharmacokinetic Phase, 721

Pharmacodynamic Phase, 721

Airway Receptors and Neural Control of the Lung, 721

Adrenergic Bronchodilators, 722

- Facilitating Secretion Clearance*, 769
 - Providing Cuff Care*, 769
 - Care of Tracheostomy and Tube*, 771
 - Troubleshooting Airway Emergencies*, 773
 - Extubation or Decannulation**, 776
 - Assessing Patient Readiness for Extubation*, 776
 - Procedures*, 776
 - References**, 779
 - 38 Emergency Cardiovascular Life Support**, 780
 - Tyler Weiss*
 - Causes and Prevention of Sudden Death**, 781
 - Basic Life Support**, 781
 - Determining Unresponsiveness*, 781
 - Restoring Circulation*, 781
 - Restoring the Airway*, 785
 - Restoring Ventilation*, 785
 - One-Rescuer Versus Two-Rescuer Adult Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation*, 788
 - Automated External Defibrillation*, 788
 - Evaluating the Effectiveness of Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation*, 790
 - Hazards and Complications*, 790
 - Contraindications to Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation*, 790
 - Health Concerns and Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation*, 790
 - Treating Foreign Body Airway Obstruction*, 791
 - Advanced Cardiovascular Life Support**, 792
 - Support for Oxygenation*, 793
 - Airway Management*, 794
 - Bag-Valve-Mask Devices*, 795
 - Restoring Cardiac Function*, 798
 - Patient Care After Resuscitation*, 806
 - Respiratory Management*, 806
 - Cardiovascular Management*, 806
 - References**, 806
- 39 Humidity and Bland Aerosol Therapy**, 808
 - Jie Li and Hui-Ling Lin*
 - Humidity Therapy**, 808
 - Physiologic Control of Heat and Moisture Exchange*, 809
 - Indications for Humidification and the Warming of Inspired Gases*, 809
 - Equipment*, 810
 - Problem Solving and Troubleshooting*, 819
 - Bland Aerosol Therapy**, 822
 - Equipment*, 822
 - Problem Solving and Troubleshooting*, 825
 - Selecting the Appropriate Therapy**, 827
 - Mechanical Ventilation*, 829
 - Noninvasive Ventilation*, 829
 - High-Flow High-Humidity Oxygen Therapy*, 829
 - Sputum Induction*, 830
 - References**, 832
- 40 Aerosol Drug Therapy**, 834
 - Jie Li and James B. Fink*
 - Characteristics of Therapeutic Aerosols**, 835
 - Aerosol Output*, 835
 - Particle Size*, 835
 - Deposition*, 835
 - Aging*, 838
 - Quantifying Aerosol Delivery*, 838
 - Hazards of Aerosol Therapy**, 838
 - Infection*, 838
 - Secondhand Exposure to Aerosol Drugs*, 839
 - Airway Reactivity*, 839
 - Pulmonary and Systemic Effects*, 840
 - Eye Irritation*, 840
 - Aerosol Drug Delivery Systems**, 840
 - Pressurized Metered Dose Inhalers*, 840
 - Dry Powder Inhalers*, 846
 - Nebulizers*, 849
 - Advantages and Disadvantages of Aerosol Systems*, 858
 - Special Medication Delivery Issues for Infants and Children*, 858
 - Selecting an Aerosol Drug Delivery System*, 860
 - Assessment-Based Bronchodilator Therapy Protocols**, 861
 - Sample Protocol*, 861
 - Assessing Patient Response*, 861
 - Patient Education*, 863
 - Special Considerations**, 864
 - Aerosol Therapy for Treatment of Pulmonary Arterial Hypertension*, 864
 - Acute Care and Off-Label Use*, 864
 - Transnasal Pulmonary Aerosol Delivery*, 865
 - Aerosol Administration During Ventilator Support*, 868
 - Aerosol Generator Placement During Mechanical Ventilation*, 871
 - Controlling Environmental Contamination**, 873
 - Negative-Pressure Rooms*, 874
 - Booths and Stations*, 874
 - Personal Protective Equipment*, 875
 - References**, 875
- 41 Storage and Delivery of Medical Gases**, 879
 - Steven Mosakowski and David L. Vines*
 - Characteristics of Medical Gases**, 880
 - Oxygen*, 880
 - Air*, 880
 - Carbon Dioxide*, 881
 - Helium*, 881
 - Nitric Oxide*, 882
 - Nitrous Oxide*, 882
 - Storage of Medical Gases**, 882
 - Gas Cylinders*, 882
 - Bulk Oxygen*, 887
 - Distribution and Regulation of Medical Gases**, 889
 - Central Piping Systems*, 889
 - Safety Indexed Connector Systems*, 890
 - Regulating Gas Pressure and Flow*, 893
 - References**, 899
- 42 Medical Gas Therapy**, 900
 - Albert J. Heuer and Gary Lombardo*
 - Oxygen Therapy**, 900
 - General Goals and Clinical Objectives*, 901
 - Assessing the Need for Oxygen Therapy*, 901
 - Precautions and Hazards of Supplemental Oxygen*, 901
 - Oxygen Delivery Systems: Design and Performance*, 904
 - Selecting a Delivery System*, 920
 - Protocol-Based Oxygen Therapy*, 921

- Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy, 922
 - Physiologic Effects*, 922
 - Methods of Administration*, 922
 - Indications*, 922
 - Complications and Hazards*, 923
 - Troubleshooting*, 924
- Other Medical Gas Therapies, 924
 - Nitric Oxide Therapy*, 924
 - Helium-Oxygen Therapy*, 926
 - Carbon Dioxide–Oxygen (Carbogen) Therapy*, 928
- References, 928

43 Lung Expansion Therapy, 930

Ramandeep Kaur and David L. Vines

- Causes and Types of Atelectasis, 931
 - Factors Associated With Causing Atelectasis*, 931
- Clinical Signs of Atelectasis, 932
- Lung Expansion Therapy, 932
 - Baseline Assessment*, 933
 - Early Mobilization of the Patient*, 933
 - Incentive Spirometry*, 933
 - Noninvasive Ventilation*, 936
 - Intermittent Positive Airway Pressure Breathing (IPPB)*, 936
 - Continuous Positive Airway Pressure (CPAP)*, 937
 - High-Flow Nasal Cannula*, 939
 - Other Therapies*, 941
 - Positive Airway Pressure (PAP)*, 941
- Selecting an Approach, 943
- References, 944

44 Airway Clearance Therapy, 945

Donna D. Gardner and David L. Vines

- Physiology of Airway Clearance Therapies, 946
 - Normal Clearance*, 946
 - Abnormal Clearance*, 946
 - Diseases Associated With Abnormal Clearance*, 947
- General Goals and Indications, 947
 - Airway Clearance Therapy for Acute Conditions*, 948
 - Airway Clearance Therapy for Chronic Conditions*, 948
 - Airway Clearance Therapy to Prevent Retention of Secretions*, 948
- Determining the Need for Airway Clearance Therapy, 948
- Airway Clearance Methods, 948
 - Chest Physical Therapy (Also Known as Postural Drainage and Percussion)*, 949
 - Coughing and Related Expulsion Techniques*, 953
 - Active Cycle of Breathing Technique*, 955
 - Autogenic Drainage*, 956
 - Mechanical Insufflation-Exsufflation*, 956
 - Positive Airway Pressure Adjuncts*, 957
 - High-Frequency Positive Airway Pressure Devices*, 958
 - High-Frequency Chest Wall Compression*, 960
 - Exercise, Mobilization, and Physical Activity*, 961
- Selecting Airway Clearance Techniques, 961
 - Selection Factors*, 961
 - Protocol-Based Airway Clearance*, 962
- References, 963

SECTION VI Acute and Critical Care

45 Respiratory Failure and the Need for Ventilatory Support, 965

Loufi S. Aboussouan

- Hypoxemic Respiratory Failure (Type I), 966
 - Ventilation/Perfusion Mismatch*, 966
 - Right-to-Left Shunt*, 967
 - Alveolar Hypoventilation*, 968
 - Diffusion Impairment*, 968
 - Perfusion/Diffusion Impairment*, 968
 - Decreased Inspired Oxygen*, 968
 - Venous Admixture*, 968
 - Differentiating the Causes of Acute Hypoxemic Respiratory Failure*, 968
 - Hypercapnic Respiratory Failure (Type II), 969
 - Unexpected Exposure to Breathing Carbon Dioxide*, 970
 - Increased Carbon Dioxide Production*, 970
 - Impairment in Respiratory Control*, 970
 - Impairment in Exhaling Carbon Dioxide*, 971
 - Summary*, 971
 - Chronic Respiratory Failure (Type I and Type II), 971
 - Acute-on-Chronic Respiratory Failure*, 971
 - Complications of Acute Respiratory Failure*, 972
 - Clinical Presentation*, 972
 - Indications for Ventilatory Support*, 972
 - Assessment of Respiratory Fatigue, Weakness, Failure, and Work of Breathing, 974
 - Respiratory Muscle Weakness*, 974
 - Respiratory Muscle Fatigue*, 974
 - Respiratory Failure*, 974
 - Work of Breathing*, 974
 - Choosing a Respiratory Support Strategy for Different Causes of Respiratory Failure, 975
 - High-Flow Oxygen Therapy*, 975
 - Noninvasive Ventilation*, 975
 - Noninvasive Ventilation in Acute Conditions*, 975
 - Noninvasive Ventilation in Chronic Conditions*, 976
 - Invasive Ventilatory Support*, 976
 - References, 977
- ### 46 Mechanical Ventilators, 979
- Robert L. Chatburn and Ariel J. Garner*
- How Ventilators Work, 979
 - The Operator Interface*, 981
 - The Patient Interface*, 983
 - Identifying Modes of Mechanical Ventilation, 985
 - The 10 Maxims for Understanding Modes*, 985
 - A Taxonomy for Mechanical Ventilation*, 998
 - How to Classify Modes*, 1000
 - Comparing Modes of Mechanical Ventilation, 1002
 - Types of Ventilators, 1003
 - Conventional Versus High-Frequency Ventilators*, 1003
 - Classification of Ventilators by Use*, 1004
 - References, 1007
- ### 47 Physiology of Ventilatory Support, 1008
- Robert L. Chatburn and Robert M. Kacmarek*
- Pressure and Pressure Gradients, 1009
 - Airway, Alveolar, and Intrathoracic Pressure, Volume, and Flow During Spontaneous Ventilation*, 1009

- Airway, Alveolar, and Intrathoracic Pressure, Volume, and Flow During Negative-Pressure Mechanical Ventilation, 1012*
- Airway, Alveolar, and Intrathoracic Pressure, Volume, and Flow During Positive-Pressure Mechanical Ventilation, 1012*
- Effects of Mechanical Ventilation on Ventilation, 1012**
- Minute Ventilation, 1012*
- Increased Alveolar Ventilation, 1013*
- Ventilation/Perfusion Ratio, 1014*
- Alveolar and Arterial Carbon Dioxide, 1015*
- Acid–Base Balance, 1015*
- Effects of Mechanical Ventilation on Oxygenation, 1016**
- Inspired Oxygen, 1016*
- Alveolar Oxygen and Alveolar Air Equation, 1016*
- Arterial Oxygenation and Oxygen Content, 1016*
- Decreased Shunt, 1016*
- Increased Tissue Oxygen Delivery, 1016*
- Effects of Positive Pressure Mechanical Ventilation on Lung Mechanics, 1017**
- Time Constants, 1017*
- Increased Pressure, 1018*
- Increased Lung Volume: Tidal Volume, 1019*
- Increased Functional Residual Capacity, 1019*
- Pressure-Volume Curve and Lung Recruitment in Acute Respiratory Distress Syndrome, 1020*
- Increased Dead Space, 1021*
- Decreased Work of Breathing, 1021*
- Minimizing Adverse Pulmonary Effects of Positive Pressure Mechanical Ventilation, 1022**
- Decreasing Pressure, 1022*
- Positive End-Expiratory Pressure or Continuous Positive Airway Pressure, 1022*
- Effects of Ventilatory Pattern, 1023*
- Trigger Site and Work of Breathing, 1023*
- Physiologic Effects of Ventilatory Modes, 1024**
- Volume-Controlled Ventilation Versus Pressure-Controlled Ventilation, 1024*
- Continuous Mandatory Ventilation, 1024*
- Intermittent Mandatory Ventilation, 1027*
- Continuous Spontaneous Ventilation, 1029*
- Improved Modes Using Advanced Targeting Schemes, 1032*
- Patient Positioning to Optimize Oxygenation and Ventilation, 1035*
- Cardiovascular Effects of Positive Pressure Mechanical Ventilation, 1035**
- Thoracic Pump and Venous Return During Spontaneous and Mechanical Ventilation, 1035*
- Compensation in Healthy Persons, 1036*
- Pulmonary Vascular Pressure, Blood Flow, and Pulmonary Vascular Resistance, 1036*
- Right and Left Ventricular Function, 1037*
- Effect on Left Ventricular Dysfunction, 1037*
- Endocardial Blood Flow, 1037*
- Cardiac Output, Cardiac Index, and Systemic Blood Pressure, 1037*
- Minimizing Cardiovascular Effects of Positive Pressure Mechanical Ventilation, 1037**
- Mean Pleural Pressure, 1037*
- Decreasing Mean Airway Pressure, 1038*
- Fluid Management and Cardiac Output, 1038*
- Pharmacologic Maintenance of Cardiac Output and Blood Pressure, 1039*
- Effects of Positive Pressure Mechanical Ventilation on Other Body Systems, 1039**
- Increased Intracranial Pressure, 1039*
- Effect on Renal Function, 1040*
- Decreased Liver and Splanchnic Perfusion, 1040*
- Decreased Gastrointestinal Function, 1040*
- Effect on Central Nervous System, 1040*
- Complications of Mechanical Ventilation, 1042**
- Negative Pressure Ventilation, 1042*
- Positive Pressure Ventilation: Artificial Airway Complications, 1042*
- Complications Related to Pressure, 1042*
- Complications Related to Volume, 1042*
- Auto–Positive End-Expiratory Pressure, 1044*
- Oxygen Toxicity, 1044*
- Ventilator-Associated (Nosocomial) Pneumonia, 1044*
- Ventilator Malfunction, 1045*
- Operator Error, 1046*
- References, 1046**
- 48 Patient–Ventilator Interactions, 1049**
- Eduardo Mireles-Cabodevila and Robert L. Chatburn*
- Step 1: Identify the Goal of Mechanical Ventilation, 1050**
- Step 2: Identify the Mode of Ventilation, 1051**
- Control Variable, 1051*
- Breath Sequence, 1051*
- Targeting Scheme, 1053*
- Mode TAG, 1054*
- Step 3: Determine the Load, 1054**
- Volume Control–Square (Constant) Flow Waveform, 1056*
- Volume Control–Descending Ramp (Decelerating) Flow Waveform, 1058*
- Pressure Control, 1058*
- Expiratory Mechanics, 1059*
- Step 4: Diagnose the Patient–Ventilator Interaction Status, 1061**
- Trigger, 1061*
- Inspiration, 1063*
- Cycle, 1065*
- Expiration, 1066*
- Multiple Triggers, 1066*
- Step 5: Summary and Intervention, 1067**
- Evaluation and Quantification of PVI Discordances, 1067*
- Conclusion, 1070**
- References, 1070**
- 49 Initiating and Adjusting Invasive Ventilatory Support, 1071**
- David L. Vines*
- Goals of Mechanical Ventilation, 1072**
- Safely Provide Gas Exchange, 1072*
- Maximize Patient Comfort, 1073*
- Promote Liberation, 1073*
- Ventilator Initiation, 1073**
- Establishment of the Airway, 1074*
- Pressure-Controlled Versus Volume-Controlled Ventilation, 1074*

- Full Ventilatory Support Versus Partial Ventilatory Support*, 1074
Choice of a Ventilator, 1075
- Initial Ventilator Settings**, 1075
Choice of Mode, 1075
Tidal Volume and Rate, 1079
Trigger Sensitivity, 1080
Inspiratory Flow, Inspiratory Time, and Inspiratory-to-Expiratory Ratio for Volume Ventilation, 1081
Oxygen Percentage (Fractional Inspired Oxygen), 1083
Positive End-Expiratory Pressure and Continuous Positive Airway Pressure, 1083
Open Lung Strategy, Recruitment Maneuvers, and Positive End-Expiratory Pressure, 1085
Limits and Alarms, 1085
Humidification, 1085
Periodic Sighs, 1086
- Adjusting Ventilatory Support**, 1086
Patient–Ventilator Interaction, 1087
- Oxygenation**, 1087
Oxygen Concentration, 1087
Positive End-Expiratory Pressure and Continuous Positive Airway Pressure, 1089
Other Techniques for Improving Oxygenation, 1095
- Ventilation**, 1096
Adjusting Tidal Volume and Rate, 1097
Pressure Support Ventilation and PaCO₂, 1099
Pressure-Controlled Ventilation and PaCO₂, 1099
PaCO₂ When Using Lung-Protective Strategies for Acute Lung Injury and Acute Respiratory Distress Syndrome, 1100
- References**, 1102
- 50 Noninvasive Ventilation**, 1104
J. Brady Scott
- History and Development of Noninvasive Ventilation**, 1105
- Indications for Noninvasive Ventilation**, 1106
Goals and Benefits of Using Noninvasive Ventilation, 1106
Acute Care Indications, 1107
Long-Term Care Indications, 1109
- Selecting Appropriate Patients for Noninvasive Ventilation**, 1110
Acute Care Setting, 1110
Long-Term Care Setting, 1111
- Equipment Used for Noninvasive Ventilation**, 1112
Patient Interfaces, 1112
Types of Mechanical Ventilators and Modes of Ventilation, 1115
Heated Humidifiers, 1118
- Management of Noninvasive Ventilation**, 1119
Initial Application of Noninvasive Ventilation, 1119
Clinical Assessment Criteria to Identify Success or Failure of Noninvasive Ventilation, 1120
Adjusting Noninvasive Ventilator Settings, 1120
Aerosolized Medication Delivery, 1120
Safe Delivery of Noninvasive Ventilation, 1121
Weaning From Noninvasive Ventilation, 1122
- Complications of Noninvasive Ventilation**, 1122
- Time and Costs Associated With Noninvasive Ventilation**, 1122
- References**, 1123
- 51 Extracorporeal Life Support**, 1125
Clorinda B. Suarez and Todd H. Mover
- The Respiratory Therapist as an Extracorporeal Membrane Oxygenation Specialist**, 1126
- Patients Receiving Extracorporeal Membrane Oxygenation**, 1126
Newborns, 1126
Pediatric and Adult Patients, 1126
- Types of Support**, 1128
Venoarterial Extracorporeal Membrane Oxygenation, 1128
Venovenous Extracorporeal Membrane Oxygenation, 1130
Hybrid Configurations for Extracorporeal Membrane Oxygenation, 1130
Extracorporeal Carbon Dioxide Removal, 1130
- Physiology**, 1131
- Equipment**, 1131
- Cannulas**, 1135
- Initiation and Maintenance of Support**, 1137
- Complications**, 1139
- Anticoagulation Management**, 1140
- Transporting a Patient on Extracorporeal Membrane Oxygenation**, 1142
- Weaning and Decannulation**, 1142
- References**, 1144
- 52 Monitoring the Patient in the Intensive Care Unit**, 1145
Thomas Piraino
- Principles of Monitoring**, 1146
History, 1146
Pathophysiology and Monitoring, 1146
- Monitoring the Patient–Ventilator System**, 1147
Graphics Monitoring, 1147
Monitoring During Lung-Protective Ventilation, 1147
- Monitoring Oxygenation**, 1148
Arterial Pulse Oximetry, 1149
Other Oxygenation Measures, 1153
- Monitoring Ventilation**, 1153
Capnography, 1153
- Monitoring Respiratory System Mechanics**, 1154
Direct Monitoring of Mechanics, 1154
Indirect Monitoring of Mechanics, 1157
Indirect Monitoring of Inspiratory Effort, 1163
- Imaging**, 1164
Ultrasound, 1164
Electrical Impedance Tomography, 1165
- Hemodynamics**, 1166
Cardiac and Cardiovascular Monitoring, 1166
Monitoring Hemodynamic Pressures, 1167
Monitoring Cardiac Output, 1169
- Neurologic Monitoring**, 1170
Neurologic Status and Examination, 1170
Pupillary Response, 1172
Eye Movements, 1173
Corneal Responses, 1173
Gag Reflex, 1173
Respiratory Rate and Pattern, 1173
Motor Evaluation, 1174
Sensory Evaluation, 1174
Glasgow Coma Scale, 1175
Intracranial Pressure Monitoring, 1175
- Nutritional Monitoring**, 1175

- Assessment of Nutritional Status*, 1175
Global Monitoring Indices, 1175
Troubleshooting, 1176
References, 1178
- 53 Discontinuing Ventilator Support**, 1180
Ramandeep Kaur and David L. Vines
Reasons for Ventilator Dependence, 1182
Ventilatory Workload and Demand, 1182
Ventilatory Capacity, 1182
Global Criteria for Discontinuing Ventilatory Support, 1183
Patient Evaluation, 1183
The Most Important Criterion, 1184
Weaning Indices, 1184
Ventilation, 1185
Oxygenation, 1187
Acid–Base Balance, 1187
Metabolic Factors, 1187
Renal Function and Electrolytes, 1187
Cardiovascular Function, 1187
Psychologic Factors and Central Nervous System Assessment, 1187
Integrated Indices, 1188
Evaluation of the Airway, 1189
Preparing the Patient, 1189
Optimizing the Patient’s Medical Condition, 1189
Patients’ Psychologic and Communication Needs, 1190
Caregiver Preparation, 1190
Methods, 1190
Rapid Ventilator Discontinuation, 1190
Patients Who Need Progressive Weaning of Ventilatory Support, 1191
Spontaneous Breathing Trials, 1191
Continuous Positive Airway Pressure, 1193
Synchronized Intermittent Mandatory Ventilation, 1193
Pressure Support Ventilation, 1194
Synchronized Intermittent Mandatory Ventilation With Pressure Support Ventilation, 1194
Spontaneous Awakening Trials, 1194
ABCDEF Bundle, 1195
Role of Early Mobility, 1195
Newer Techniques for Facilitating Ventilator Discontinuance, 1195
Mandatory Minute Volume Ventilation, 1195
Adaptive Support Ventilation/IntelliVent, 1195
Computer-Based Weaning, 1197
Automatic Tube Compensation, 1197
Volume Support, 1197
Proportional Assist Ventilation and Neurally Adjusted Ventilatory Assist, 1197
Newer Techniques for Evaluation of Diaphragm Function and Prediction of Successful Discontinuation, 1197
Noninvasive Ventilation/Continuous Positive Airway Pressure, 1198
High-Flow Nasal Cannula, 1198
Respiratory Therapist–Driven Protocols, 1198
ATS/ACCP Ventilation Liberation Guidelines, 1199
Selecting an Approach, 1199
The Morbidly Obese Patient, 1199
- Monitoring the Patient During Weaning**, 1200
Ventilatory Status, 1200
Oxygenation, 1201
Cardiovascular Status, 1201
Extubation, 1201
Artificial Airways and Weaning, 1201
Postextubation Complications, 1202
Ventilator Discontinuance Failure, 1202
Prolonged Mechanical Ventilation, 1203
Chronically Ventilator-Dependent Patients, 1203
Terminal/Compassionate Extubation, 1205
References, 1205
- 54 Neonatal and Pediatric Respiratory Care**, 1208
Ibrahim Abdallah Khalil Sammour and Robert DiBlasi
Assessment of the Newborn and Pediatric Patient, 1209
Maternal Factors, 1209
Fetal Assessment and Neonatal Transition, 1209
Evaluation of the Newborn, 1212
Respiratory Assessment of the Infant, 1216
Respiratory Assessment of the Pediatric Patient, 1220
Respiratory Care, 1221
Oxygen Therapy, 1221
Airway Clearance Techniques, 1223
Humidity and Aerosol Therapy, 1225
Airway Management, 1227
Continuous Positive Airway Pressure, 1229
Methods of Administration, 1229
Heated, Humidified, High-Flow Nasal Cannula, 1231
Noninvasive Ventilation, 1231
Mechanical Ventilation, 1232
Basic Principles, 1232
Indications and Goals of Mechanical Ventilation, 1232
Ventilator Modes, 1233
Ventilator Settings and Parameters, 1236
Monitoring Mechanical Ventilation, 1240
Changing Lung Mechanics in Childhood, 1241
Liberation From Mechanical Ventilation, 1243
High-Frequency Ventilation, 1243
Complications of Mechanical Ventilation, 1244
Specialty Gases, 1244
Inhaled Nitric Oxide, 1244
Heliox, 1245
Neonatal and Pediatric Transport, 1246
References, 1246

SECTION VII Patient Education and Long-Term Care

- 55 Health Promotion Through Patient Education**, 1251
Donna D. Gardner
Health Promotion and Disease Prevention, 1252
Population Health and Chronic Disease Management, 1254
Implications for the Respiratory Therapist, 1257
Health Education, 1258
Patient Education, 1258
Cultural Awareness, 1258
Health Literacy, 1260
Establishing Goals for Patient Teaching, 1260
Performance Objectives, 1263

- Learning Domains*, 1263
- Provide Educational Resources*, 1264
- Teaching Children, Adolescents, Adults, and Older Adults*, 1264
- Teach-Back or Echo Method*, 1265
- Evaluation of Patient Education*, 1267
- Patient Education Teaching Tips*, 1267
- References, 1268
- 56 Cardiopulmonary Rehabilitation**, 1269
 - Julie Ann Connelly and Albert J. Heuer*
 - Definitions and Goals**, 1270
 - Historical Perspective**, 1270
 - Physical and Psychosocial Basis**, 1271
 - Physical Reconditioning*, 1271
 - Psychosocial Support*, 1271
 - Structure of a Pulmonary Rehabilitation Program**, 1273
 - Program Qualification*, 1273
 - Program Goals and Objectives*, 1273
 - Program Performance Measures*, 1274
 - Patient Evaluation and Selection*, 1274
 - Program Design*, 1276
 - Program Implementation*, 1281
 - Web-Based Pulmonary Rehabilitation*, 1283
 - Financial Considerations**, 1283
 - Costs and Fees*, 1283
 - Reimbursement Qualifications*, 1284
 - Program Results*, 1285
 - Potential Hazards*, 1286
 - Cardiac Rehabilitation**, 1286
 - Conclusion**, 1287
 - References, 1287
- 57 Respiratory Care in Alternative Settings**, 1289
 - Albert J. Heuer and Andres Osorio*
 - More Recent Developments and Trends**, 1290
 - Relevant Terms and Goals**, 1290
 - Long-Term Subacute Care Hospitals*, 1290
 - Subacute Care*, 1290
 - Home Care*, 1291
 - Standards**, 1291
 - Regulations*, 1291
 - Private Sector Accreditation*, 1291
 - Traditional Acute Care Versus Alternative Setting Care**, 1291
 - Discharge Planning**, 1292
 - Multidisciplinary Team*, 1292
 - Oxygen Therapy in Alternative Settings**, 1294
 - Oxygen Therapy Prescription*, 1294
 - Oxygen Qualification Criteria*, 1294
 - Supply Methods*, 1294
 - Delivery Methods*, 1296
 - Ventilatory Support in Alternative Settings**, 1298
 - Patient Selection*, 1298
 - Settings and Approaches*, 1298
 - Special Challenges in Providing Home Ventilatory Support*, 1298
 - Invasive Versus Noninvasive Ventilatory Support*, 1299
 - Equipment*, 1300
 - Other Modes of Respiratory Care in Alternative Sites**, 1302
 - Bland Aerosol Therapy*, 1302
 - Aerosol Drug Administration*, 1302
 - Airway Care and Clearance Methods*, 1302
 - Continuous Positive Airway Pressure Therapy*, 1303
 - Apnea Monitoring*, 1305
 - Patient Assessment and Documentation**, 1305
 - Institutional Long-Term Care*, 1305
 - Home Care Plan*, 1306
 - Equipment Disinfection and Maintenance**, 1306
 - References, 1306
- 58 Ethics and the End of Life**, 1308
 - Emmett A. Kistler, Frederic Romain, Ellen M. Robinson, and M. Cornelia Cremens*
 - “Goals of Care” as an Essential Organizing Framework**, 1309
 - Medical Prognosis and Rehabilitative Prognosis*, 1309
 - Values, Beliefs, and Preferences*, 1310
 - Ethical and Legal Parameters*, 1312
 - Management of Pain and Other Symptoms at the End of Life: Legal and Ethical Considerations**, 1314
 - Physician-Assisted Suicide*, 1314
 - Euthanasia*, 1315
 - Ethically Defensible Comfort-Oriented Care*, 1315
 - Special Situations*, 1319
 - Ethical Conflict at the End of Life**, 1319
 - Professional Position Statements, Empirical Data, and Hospital Policy Provide Support in Ethical Conflict*, 1320
 - The Respiratory Therapist as Ethical Practitioner**, 1322
 - References, 1323
- Glossary, 1325

VIDEO CONTENTS

- Video 9.1 Respiratory System Overview
- Video 9.2 Cardiopulmonary System
- Video 10.1 Cardiac Cycle
- Video 10.2 Electrical Conduction System of the Heart
- Video 10.3 Overview of the Cardiovascular System
- Video 10.4 Physiology of Blood Pressure
- Video 12.1 Oxygenation
- Video 12.2 Gas Exchange
- Video 12.3 Gas Exchange in the Lungs
- Video 12.4 Gas Exchange in the Tissues
- Video 14.1 Respiratory Acidosis
- Video 14.2 Respiratory Alkalosis
- Video 14.3 Metabolic Acidosis
- Video 16.1 Body Temperature Measurement
- Video 18.1 Electrocardiogram
- Video 18.2 Normal Sinus Rhythm
- Video 18.3 Synchronized Cardioversion
- Video 19.1 Calibration of an O₂ Analyzer
- Video 19.2 Perform an Artery Puncture to Obtain an Arterial Blood Gas
- Video 19.3 Performing a Capillary Blood Gas Sample
- Video 19.4 How Pulse Oximetry Works
- Video 22.1 Normal Bronchoscopy
- Video 26.1 CT of Combined Pulmonary Fibrosis and Emphysema
- Video 27.1 Simple Pleural Effusion
- Video 28.1 Pulmonary Embolism, Infarct, and Effusion
- Video 28.2 Echocardiogram in Pulmonary hypertension
- Video 30.1 Flail Chest Paradoxical Chest Wall Movement
- Video 30.2 Blunt Thoracic Traumatic Injury
- Video 33.1 Cough Assist
- Video 34.1 Drug-Induced Sleep Endoscopy (DISE)
- Video 37.1 Performing Endotracheal Suctioning
- Video 37.2 Orotracheal Intubation
- Video 38.1 Rescue Breathing, CPR and AED
- Video 38.2 Managing a Conscious Choking Adult
- Video 40.1 Using an In-Check Dial
- Video 41.1 Attaching a Reducing Valve to an H Cylinder
- Video 41.2 Attaching a Flow Meter to a Quick Connect Outlet
- Video 41.3 Attaching a Bourdon Gauge Regulator to an E Cylinder
- Video 43.1 Demonstration of How to Use an Incentive Spirometer
- Video 43.2 Demonstration of How to Provide an IPPB Treatment
- Video 50.1 Overview of Using Noninvasive Positive Pressure Ventilation
- Video 53.1 SBT Weaning Protocol With and Without PSV and CPAP
- Video 53.2 Pressure Support Weaning Protocol



Early History of Respiratory Care^a

James K. Stoller and Albert J. Heuer

OUTLINE

Definitions, 2

History of Respiratory Medicine and Science, 2

Ancient Times, 2

The Middle Ages, Renaissance, and Enlightenment Period, 2

Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries, 4

Development of the Respiratory Care Profession, 5

Clinical Advances in Respiratory Care, 5

Professional Organizations and Events, 10

American Association for Respiratory Care, 10

Respiratory Care Week, 11

Board of Medical Advisors, 11

American Respiratory Care Foundation, 11

International Council for Respiratory Care, 11

National Board for Respiratory Care, 11

National Board for Respiratory Care, 12

Committee on Accreditation for Respiratory Care, 12

Respiratory Care Education, 12

References, 13

CHAPTER OBJECTIVES

After reading this chapter you will be able to:

- Define respiratory care
- Summarize some of the major events in the history of science and medicine that have directly affected respiratory care
- Explain how the respiratory care profession began
- Describe the historical development of the major clinical areas of respiratory care
- Name some of the important historical figures in respiratory care
- Describe the major respiratory care educational, credentialing, and professional associations
- Explain how the important respiratory care organizations began
- Describe the development of respiratory care education

KEY TERMS

American Association for Respiratory Care (AARC)

American Respiratory Care Foundation (ARCF)

Board of Medical Advisors (BOMA)

Committee on Accreditation for Respiratory Care (CoARC)

Fellow of the American Association for Respiratory Care (FAARC)

International Council for Respiratory Care (ICRC)

National Board for Respiratory Care (NBRC)

physician assistant

respiratory care

respiratory care practitioner

respiratory therapist (RT)

respiratory therapy

^aThanks to Robert M. Kacmarek for contributions to earlier versions of this chapter.

The history of science and medicine is a fascinating topic, which begins in ancient times and progresses to the 21st century. Although respiratory care is a newer discipline, its roots go back to the dawn of civilization. The first written account of positive-pressure ventilation using mouth-to-mouth resuscitation is thought to have been recorded more than 28 centuries ago.¹ Air was thought to be one of the four basic elements by the ancients, and the practice of medicine dates back to ancient Babylonia and Egypt. The progression of science and medicine continued through the centuries, and the development of the modern disciplines of anesthesiology, pulmonary medicine, and respiratory care during the 20th and centuries depended on the work of many earlier scientists and physicians. This chapter describes the early development of respiratory medicine and the history and development of the field of respiratory care. Specifically, after an historical overview, the birth of respiratory care as a profession is discussed, followed by a discussion of specific therapies (e.g., supplemental oxygen, mechanical ventilation) and a description of various respiratory care organizations (e.g., the American Association for Respiratory Care [AARC], the American Respiratory Care Foundation [ARCF]).

DEFINITIONS

Respiratory care, also known as **respiratory therapy**, has been defined as the health care discipline that specializes in the promotion of optimal cardiopulmonary function and health.² **Respiratory therapists (RTs)** apply scientific principles to prevent, identify, and treat acute or chronic dysfunction of the cardiopulmonary system.² Respiratory care includes the assessment, treatment, management, control, diagnostic evaluation, education, and care of patients with deficiencies and abnormalities of the cardiopulmonary system.² Respiratory care is increasingly involved in preventing respiratory disease, managing patients with chronic respiratory disease, and promoting health and wellness.²

RTs, also known as **respiratory care practitioners**, are health care professionals who are educated and trained to provide respiratory care to patients. Approximately 75% of all RTs work in hospitals or other acute care settings.³ However, many RTs are employed in clinics, physicians' offices, skilled nursing facilities, and cardiopulmonary diagnostic laboratories. Others work in research, disease management programs, home care, and industry. RTs are also employed by colleges and universities to teach in RT training programs.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that there are 135,600 RTs in the United States as of 2021 and that the number of RTs is expected to grow by 14% from 2021 to 2031.³ As the incidence of chronic respiratory diseases continues to increase, the demand for RTs is expected to be even greater in the years ahead. Although the RT as a distinct health care provider was originally unique to North America, since the 1990s, there has been a steady increase in specially trained professionals providing respiratory care worldwide. This trend is referred to as the *globalization of respiratory care*.

RULE OF THUMB Respiratory care has been defined as the health care discipline that specializes in promoting optimal cardiopulmonary function and health.² RTs apply scientific principles to prevent, identify, and treat acute or chronic dysfunction of the cardiopulmonary system.

HISTORY OF RESPIRATORY MEDICINE AND SCIENCE

Several excellent reviews of the history of respiratory care have been written.^{1,4–6} **Table 1.1** summarizes notable historical events in respiratory care and a brief description of the history of science and medicine follows.

Ancient Times

Humans have been concerned about the common problems of sickness, disease, old age, and death since primitive times. Early cultures developed herbal treatments for many diseases, and surgery may have been performed in Neolithic times. Physicians practiced medicine in ancient Mesopotamia, Egypt, India, and China.^{1,4,7} However, the foundation of modern Western medicine was laid in ancient Greece, with the development of the Hippocratic corpus.^{1,4,7,8} This ancient collection of medical treatises is attributed to the “father of medicine,” Hippocrates, a Greek physician who lived during the fifth and fourth centuries BC.^{1,7,8} Hippocratic medicine was based on four essential fluids, or “humors”—phlegm, blood, yellow bile, and black bile—and the four elements—earth (cold, dry), fire (hot, dry), water (cold, moist), and air (hot, moist). Diseases were thought to be humoral disorders caused by imbalances in these essential substances. Hippocrates believed that an essential substance in the air was distributed to the body by the heart.¹ The Hippocratic oath, which instructs physicians to follow certain ethical principles, is taken in a modern form by medical students at graduation.^{1,8}

Aristotle (384 to 322 BC), a Greek philosopher and perhaps the first great biologist, believed that knowledge could be gained through careful observation.^{1,8} He made many scientific observations, including some obtained by performing experiments on animals. Erasistratus (~330 to 240 BC), regarded by some as the founder of the science of physiology, developed a pneumatic theory of respiration in Alexandria, Egypt, in which air (*pneuma*) entered the lungs and was transferred to the heart.^{1,7} Galen (AD 130 to 199) was an anatomist in Asia Minor whose comprehensive work dominated medical thinking for centuries.^{1,6,7} Galen also believed that inspired air contained a vital substance that somehow charged the blood through the heart.¹

The Middle Ages, Renaissance, and Enlightenment Period

The Romans carried on the Greek traditions in philosophy, science, and medicine. With the fall of the Western Roman Empire in AD 476, many Greek and Roman texts were lost and Europe entered a period during which few advances were made in science or medicine. In the seventh century AD, the Arabians conquered Persia, where they found and preserved many of the

TABLE 1.1 Major Historical Events in Respiratory Care in the Twentieth to Twenty First Centuries

1909	Meltzer (1851–1920; United States) introduces oral endotracheal intubation.
1910	Oxygen tents are in use, and the clinical use of aerosolized epinephrine is introduced.
1911	Drager (1847–1917; Germany) develops the Pulmotor ventilator for use in resuscitation.
1913	Jackson develops a laryngoscope to insert endotracheal tubes.
1918	Oxygen mask is used to treat combat-induced pulmonary edema.
1926	Barach develops an oxygen tent with cooling and carbon dioxide removal.
1928	Drinker develops his “iron lung” negative-pressure ventilator.
1938	Barach develops the meter mask for administering dilute oxygen. Boothby, Lovelace, and Bulbulian devise the BLB mask at the Mayo Clinic for delivering high concentrations of oxygen.
1945	Motley, Courmand, and Werko use intermittent positive-pressure ventilation to treat various respiratory disorders.
1947	The Inhalation Therapy Association (ITA) is formed in Chicago, Illinois. The ITA later becomes the AARC.
1948	Bennett introduces the TV-2P positive-pressure ventilator.
1952	Mørch introduces the piston ventilator.
1954	The ITA becomes the AAIT.
1954	The American Association for Inhalation Therapists (AAIT) is formed.
1956	The first guidelines for respiratory care educational programs are published.
1958	Bird introduces the Bird Mark 7 positive-pressure ventilator.
1960	The Campbell Ventimask for delivering dilute concentrations of oxygen is introduced.
1961	Jenn becomes the first registered respiratory therapist. Also, metaproterenol, a preferential β -2 bronchodilator, is introduced.
1963	The Board of Schools is formed to accredit inhalation therapy educational programs.
1964	The Emerson Postoperative Ventilator (3-PV) positive-pressure volume ventilator is introduced.
1967	The Bennett MA-1 volume ventilator is introduced, ushering in the modern age of mechanical ventilatory support for routine use in critical care units.
1967	The combined pH-Clark-Severinghaus electrode is developed for rapid blood gas analysis.
1968	The fiberoptic bronchoscope becomes available for clinical use. The Engström 300 and Ohio 560 positive-pressure volume ventilators are introduced.
1969	ARDS and PEEP are described by Petty, Ashbaugh, and Bigelow.
1970	The Swan-Ganz catheter, developed for the measurement of pulmonary artery pressures, is introduced. The American Respiratory Care Foundation (ARCF) is incorporated. The JRCITE is incorporated to accredit respiratory therapy educational programs.
1970	Joint Review Committee for Inhalation Therapy Education (JRCITE/JRCRTE) is formed.
1971	CPAP is introduced by Gregory. The <i>Respiratory Care</i> journal is introduced.
1972	The Siemens Servo 900 ventilator is introduced.
1973	IMV is described by Kirby and Downs. The AAIT becomes the AART.
1973	The AAIT is renamed as the American Association for Respiratory Therapy (ARRT)
1974	The IMV Emerson ventilator is introduced.
1974	The National Board for Respiratory Therapy (NBRT) is formed.
1975	The Bourns Bear I ventilator is introduced.
1977	The JRCITE becomes the JRCRTE.
1978	Puritan Bennett introduces the MA-2 volume ventilator. The <i>AARC Times</i> magazine is introduced.
1979	AIDS is recognized by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC [later, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention]).
1982	Siemens Servo 900C and Bourns Bear II ventilators are introduced.
1982	The ARRT becomes the AARC.
1983	The NBRT becomes the National Board for Respiratory Care (NBRC).
1983	President Reagan signs a proclamation declaring National Respiratory Care Week.
1984	Bennett 7200 microprocessor-controlled ventilator is introduced.
1984	The AART is renamed the AARC.
1984	The NBRC begins offering its first specialty examinations, starting pulmonary function technology (CPFT/PPFT).
1991	The Servo 300 ventilator is introduced.
1992, 1993	The AARC holds national respiratory care education consensus conferences.
1994	The CDC publishes the first guidelines for the prevention of ventilator-associated pneumonia.
1996	The CoARC is formed, replacing the JRCRTE.
1990's–2010's	A host of new or modified modes of mechanical ventilation are introduced, including pressure-regulated volume control (PRVC), neutrally adjusted ventilatory assist (NAVA), airway pressure release ventilation (APRV).

AAIT, American Association for Inhalation Therapist; AARC, American Association for Respiratory Care; ARDS, acute respiratory distress syndrome; BLB, Boothby, Lovelace, and Bulbulian; CoARC, Committee on Accreditation for Respiratory Care; CPAP, continuous positive-airway pressure; IMV, intermittent mandatory ventilation; JRCITE, Joint Review Committee for Inhalation Therapy Education; JRCRTE, Joint Review Committee for Respiratory Therapy Education; NBRC, National Board for Respiratory Care; NBRT, National Board for Respiratory Therapy; PEEP, positive end-expiratory pressure.

Data from references 1, 3–9, 11–14, and 17.

works of the ancient Greeks, including the works of Hippocrates, Aristotle, and Galen.^{1,7} A golden age of Arabian medicine (AD 850 to 1050) followed.

An intellectual rebirth in Europe began in the 12th century.^{1,7} Medieval universities were formed, and contact with the Arabs in Spain and Sicily reintroduced ancient Greek and Roman texts. Magnus (1192 to 1280) studied the works of Aristotle and made many observations related to astronomy, botany, chemistry, zoology, and physiology. The Renaissance (1450 to 1600) ushered in a period of scientific, artistic, and medical advances. Leonardo da Vinci (1452 to 1519) studied human anatomy, determined that subatmospheric intrapleural pressures inflated the lungs, and observed that fire consumed a vital substance in the air without which animals could not live.^{1,4} Vesalius (1514 to 1564), considered to be the founder of the modern field of human anatomy, performed human dissections and experimented with resuscitation.¹ In 1543, the date commonly given as the birth of modern science, Copernicus observed that the planet Earth orbited the sun,⁸ challenging the earlier belief that the Earth was the center of the universe.

The 17th century was a time of great advances in science. Accomplished scientists from this period include Kepler, Bacon, Galileo, Pascal, Hooke, and Newton. In 1628, Harvey fully described the circulatory system.^{4,8} In 1662, the chemist Boyle published what is now known as Boyle's law, governing the relationship between the volume and pressure of a gas,⁸ that is, that for a given mass at a constant temperature, the product of the pressure and volume of a gas is constant. Torricelli invented the barometer in 1650, and Pascal showed that atmospheric pressure decreases with altitude.^{1,4} van Leeuwenhoek (1632 to 1723), known as the "father of microbiology," improved the microscope and was the first to observe and describe single-celled organisms, which he called "animalcules."⁷

The 18th-century Enlightenment period brought further advances in the sciences. In 1754, Black described the properties of carbon dioxide, although the discovery of carbon dioxide should be credited to van Helmont, whose work occurred approximately 100 years earlier.¹ In 1774, Priestley described oxygen, which he called "dephlogisticated air."^{1,4} Before 1773, Scheele performed the laboratory synthesis of oxygen, which he called "fire air"; a general description of his discovery appeared in 1774, and a more thorough description in 1777.^{1,4} Shortly after the discovery of oxygen, Spallanzani worked out the relationship between the consumption of oxygen and tissue respiration.¹ In 1787, Charles described the relationship between gas temperature and volume, now known as Charles' law.⁸ In experiments performed between 1775 and 1794, Lavoisier showed that oxygen was absorbed by the lungs and that carbon dioxide and water were exhaled.^{1,4} In 1798, Beddoes began using oxygen to treat various conditions at his Pneumatic Institute in Bristol, England.^{1,4}

RULE OF THUMB In 1662, the chemist Boyle published what is now known as Boyle's law, governing the relationship between gas volume and pressure. Boyle's law states that for a given mass at a constant temperature, the product of the pressure and volume of a gas is constant.

Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries

During the 19th century, important advances were made in physics and chemistry related to respiratory physiology. Dalton described his law of partial pressures for a gas mixture (i.e., Dalton's law that the total pressure of a mixture of gases is equal to the sum of the partial pressures of the component gases) in 1801 and his atomic theory in 1808.⁸ Young in 1805 and de LaPlace in 1806 described the relationship between pressure and surface tension in fluid droplets.⁸ Gay-Lussac described the relationship between gas pressure and temperature in 1808; in 1811, Avogadro determined that equal volumes of gases at the same temperature and pressure contain the same number of molecules.^{1,8} In 1831, Graham described his law of diffusion for gases (Graham's law, i.e., that the rate of diffusion of a gas is inversely proportional to the square root of its molecular weight).⁸

In 1865, Pasteur advanced his "germ theory" of disease, which held that many diseases are caused by microorganisms.⁸ Medical advances during this time included the invention of the spirometer and ether anesthesia in 1846, antiseptic techniques in 1865, and vaccines in the 1880s.^{1,4,7} Koch, a pioneer in bacteriology, discovered the tubercle bacillus, which causes tuberculosis, in 1882, and the vibrio bacterium, which causes cholera, in 1883.⁷ He also developed Koch's postulates, which are criteria designed to establish a causative relationship between a microbe and a disease. The four Koch's postulates are:

1. The bacteria must be present in every case of the disease.
2. The bacteria must be isolated from the host with the disease and grown in pure culture.
3. The specific disease must be reproduced when a pure culture of the bacteria is inoculated into a healthy susceptible host, and
4. The bacteria must be recoverable from the experimentally infected host.

Respiratory physiology also progressed with the measurement in 1837 of blood oxygen and carbon dioxide content, description around 1880 of the respiratory quotient (i.e., a dimensionless number that is the ratio of the volume of carbon dioxide released over the volume of oxygen absorbed during respiration), demonstration in 1885 that carbon dioxide is the major stimulant for breathing, and demonstration in 1878 that oxygen partial pressure and blood oxygen content were related.^{1,4,9} In 1895, Roentgen discovered the x-ray, and the modern field of radiologic imaging sciences was born.⁸ Pioneering respiratory physiologists of the early 20th century described oxygen diffusion, oxygen and carbon dioxide transport, the oxyhemoglobin dissociation curve, acid-base balance, and the mechanics of breathing and made other important advances in respiratory physiology.

RULE OF THUMB In experiments performed between 1775 and 1794, Lavoisier showed that oxygen was absorbed by the lungs and that carbon dioxide and water were exhaled.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE RESPIRATORY CARE PROFESSION

Clinical Advances in Respiratory Care

The evolution of the respiratory care profession depended in many ways on developments in the various treatment techniques that matured in the 20th century. As the scientific basis for oxygen therapy, mechanical ventilatory support, and administration of medical aerosols became well established, the need for a health care practitioner to provide these services became apparent. Concurrent with this need was the continuing development of specialized cardiopulmonary diagnostic tests and monitoring procedures, which also required skilled health care specialists to perform.

The first health care specialists in the field were oxygen technicians in the 1940s.^{1,4,5} The development of positive-pressure breathing during World War II for breathing support of high-altitude pilots led to its use as a method to treat pulmonary patients and deliver aerosol medications during the 1950s, expanding the role of the oxygen technicians. Inhalation therapists began to be trained in the 1950s, and formal education programs began in the 1960s.^{1,4,5} By the end of the 1960s, respiratory care personnel were all referred to as “inhalation therapists”; they provided oxygen therapy from large H cylinders (see Chapters 41 and 42) and oxygen tents, masks, and nasal catheters. In addition, these inhalation therapists delivered aerosolized medications and performed intermittent positive-pressure breathing (IPPB) treatments. The development of sophisticated mechanical ventilators in the 1960s and beyond naturally led to a further expansion of the role of RTs, who soon also found themselves responsible for arterial blood gas and pulmonary function laboratories. In 1974, the designation *respiratory therapist* became standard, and the RT became the allied health professional primarily concerned with the assessment, diagnostic testing, treatment, education, and care of patients with deficiencies and abnormalities of the cardiopulmonary system.

RULE OF THUMB When information about the respiratory care profession is being sought, the best place to look is the AARC (see www.AARC.org). The AARC’s *Virtual Museum* can be accessed through the AARC website.

Oxygen Therapy

The therapeutic administration of oxygen first occurred in 1798; in 1878, Bert showed that lack of oxygen caused hyperventilation. However, the physiologic basis and indications for oxygen therapy were not well understood until the 20th century.^{1,4} Large-scale production of oxygen was developed by von Linde in 1907. The use of a nasal catheter for oxygen administration was introduced by Lane in the same year.^{1,4} Oxygen tents were in use in 1910, and an oxygen mask was used to treat combat gas-induced pulmonary edema in 1918.¹ In 1920, Hill developed an oxygen tent to treat leg ulcers, and in 1926, Barach introduced a sophisticated oxygen tent for clinical use. Oxygen chambers and whole oxygen rooms were designed.^{1,4} In 1938, a meter mask



Fig. 1.1 The BLB mask (Boothby, Lovelace, and Bulbulian) to administer 80% to 100% oxygen to pilots was introduced during World War II and later used on patients in the 1950s and 1960s.

was developed by Barach to administer dilute oxygen.^{1,4} The BLB mask (named for Boothby, Lovelace, and Bulbulian) to administer 80% to 100% oxygen to pilots was introduced during World War II and later used for clinical care (Fig. 1.1).^{1,4} By the 1940s, oxygen was widely prescribed in hospitals, although there was still no good way to measure blood oxygen levels routinely until the mid-1960s, with the introduction of the Clark electrode, followed by the clinical use of the ear oximeter in 1974 and the pulse oximeter in the 1980s.^{1,4,5} The Campbell Ventimask—which allowed the administration of 24%, 28%, 35%, or 40% oxygen—was introduced in 1960, and modern versions of the nasal cannula, simple oxygen mask, partial rebreathing mask, and non-rebreathing mask were available by the late 1960s. Portable liquid oxygen systems for long-term oxygen therapy in the home were introduced in the 1970s, and the oxygen concentrator soon followed. Oxygen-conserving devices—including reservoir cannulas, demand pulse oxygen systems, and trans-tracheal oxygen catheters—were introduced in the 1980s.

The late 1990s saw further advances in home oxygen therapy equipment with the introduction of oxygen concentrators used in conjunction with a pressure booster to allow for the refilling of small portable oxygen cylinders in the home (see Chapters 41, 42 and 57). Smaller, lightweight portable oxygen concentrators were also introduced. Both of these advances have greatly enhanced the ability of patients receiving long-term oxygen therapy to walk and to get outside their homes. Furthermore, the National Institutes of Health launched the

Long-Term Oxygen Treatment Trial (LOTT), a randomized controlled trial to explore the benefits of supplemental oxygen in patients with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) and mild resting hypoxemia (SpO_2 89% to 93%) or with exercise desaturation.¹⁰ In contrast to the case of COPD patients with severe hypoxemia (i.e., resting room air $\text{SpO}_2 < 89\%$) in whom supplemental oxygen prolongs survival, the findings of LOTT showed that supplemental oxygen did not offer benefit for 2-year mortality or all-cause hospitalization.

RULE OF THUMB In 1974, the designation *respiratory therapist* became standard, and the RT became the allied health professional primarily concerned with the assessment, diagnostic testing, treatment, education, and care of patients with deficiencies and abnormalities of the cardiopulmonary system.

Aerosol Medications

Aerosol therapy is defined as the administration of liquid or powdered aerosol particles by inhalation to achieve a desired therapeutic effect. Bland aerosols (sterile water, saline solutions) or solutions containing pharmacologically active drugs may be administered. In 1802, the use of inhaled *Datura* leaf fumes, which contain atropine, to treat asthma was described.¹¹ Early use of aerosol medications dates to 1910 when the first use of aerosolized epinephrine was reported. Later, other short-acting bronchodilators—such as isoproterenol (1940), isotharine (1951), metaproterenol (1961), albuterol sulfate (1980), and levalbuterol (2000)—were introduced, primarily for the emergency treatment of acute asthma attacks.¹¹ In the late 1990s, long-acting bronchodilators, initially administered twice daily and more recently administered once daily, were introduced for the maintenance treatment of COPD. Oral and injectable steroids were first used in the treatment of asthma in the early 1950s, and the use of aerosolized steroids for the maintenance of patients with moderate to severe asthma began in the 1970s.¹¹ Newer medications continued to be developed for aerosol administration, including even longer-acting bronchodilators (once every 24 hours), mucolytics, antibiotics, antiinflammatory agents, and combination drugs such as long-acting bronchodilators and antiinflammatories delivered in a single inhalation. Along with newer respiratory drugs, newer delivery devices such as dry powder inhalers and innovative designs for small-volume nebulizers have been introduced.

Mechanical Ventilation

Mechanical ventilation involves the use of a mechanical device to provide ventilatory support for patients. In 1744, Fothergill advocated mouth-to-mouth resuscitation for drowning victims.^{1,6} During the mid- to late- 1700s, there was a great deal of interest in resuscitation, and additional procedures for cardiopulmonary resuscitation were developed.^{1,4,6} Positive-pressure ventilation using a bag-mask system or bellows was suggested. However, the observation that a fatal pneumothorax may result caused this technique to be rejected around 1827.^{1,4} Interest in negative-pressure ventilation developed, and the first

negative-pressure tank ventilator was described in 1832 (Fig. 1.2).⁶ Other negative-pressure ventilators began to appear in the mid-1800s; in 1928, the iron lung was developed by Drinker, an industrial hygienist and faculty member at Harvard University.¹ Emerson developed a commercial version of the iron lung, which was used extensively during the polio epidemics of the 1930s and 1950s (Figs. 1.3–1.5).^{1,12} The chest cuirass negative-pressure ventilator was introduced in the early 1900s (Fig. 1.6), and a negative-pressure “wrap” ventilator was introduced in the 1950s.¹³ Other early noninvasive techniques to augment ventilation included the rocking bed (1950) and the Pneumobelt (1959).¹³

Originally, positive-pressure ventilators were developed for use during anesthesia; later, they were altered for use in hospital wards.¹⁴ Early positive-pressure ventilators included the Drager Pulmotor (Fig. 1.7) (1911), the Spiropulsator (1934), the Bennett TV-2P (1948), the Morch Piston Ventilator (Fig. 1.8) (1952), and the Bird Mark 7 (1958) (Fig. 1.9).^{1,14} More sophisticated positive-pressure volume ventilators were developed in the 1960s and included the Emerson Postoperative Ventilator, MA-1 (Fig. 1.10), Engstrom 300, and Ohio 560.^{1,14} A new generation of volume ventilators appeared in the 1970s that included the Servo 900 (Fig. 1.11), Bourns Bear I and II, and MA-II. By the 1980s, microprocessor-controlled ventilators began to appear, led by the Bennett 7200 in 1984; in 1988, the Respironics bilevel positive-airway-pressure (BiPAP) device was introduced for providing noninvasive positive-pressure ventilation in a wide variety of settings.¹ During the 1990s and beyond, new ventilators have continued to be developed,

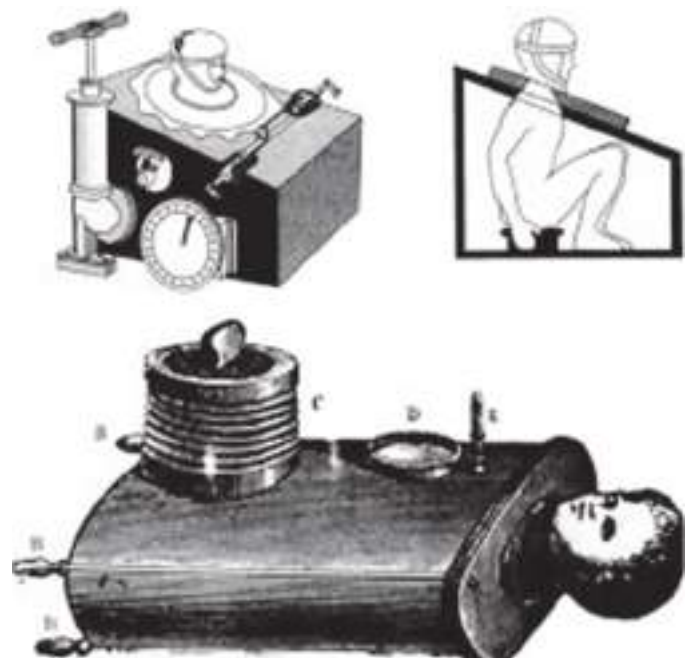


Fig. 1.2 Negative-Pressure Ventilator Used in the Mid-1800s. (Top, From Dalziel J: On sleep and apparatus for promoting artificial respiration. *BR Assoc Adv Sci* 1:127, 1838. Bottom, From Woollam CH: The development of apparatus for intermittent negative pressure respiration. (2) 1919–1976, with special reference to the development and uses of cuirass respirators. *Anaesthesia* 31[5]:666–685, 1976.)



Fig. 1.3 Multiperson Negative-Pressure Ventilation Chamber Used at Boston Children's Hospital. (From Public Health Image Library (PHIL), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Office of the Associate Director for Communications, Division of Public Affairs. CDC/GHO/Mary Hilpertshauer.)



Fig. 1.4 Iron Lung Patients in a 1950s Polio Ward. (From the Associated Press and [Post-Gazette.com](http://www.post-gazette.com/pg/05094/482468.stm) Health, Science and Environment. <http://www.post-gazette.com/pg/05094/482468.stm>.)



Fig. 1.5 Modern Negative-Pressure Ventilator Used in Europe. (From Albert RK, Spiro SG, Jett JR: *Clinical respiratory medicine*, ed 2, Philadelphia, 2004, Mosby.)



Fig. 1.6 Chest Cuirass Negative-Pressure Ventilator. (From Albert RK, Spiro SG, Jett JR: *Clinical respiratory medicine*, ed 2, Philadelphia, 2004, Mosby.)

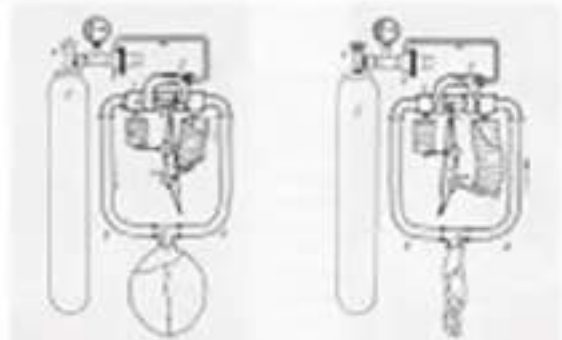


Fig. 1.7 Drager Pulmotor, First Half of the 1900s. (From Mushin WW, Rendell-Baker L, Thompson PW, Mapleson WW: *Automatic ventilation of the lungs*, Oxford, 1980, Blackwell Scientific.)

including the Hamilton G5, Servo I, PB 840, (Fig. 1.12) and Drager V500 and VN500 series (see Chapter 46). Between 1970 and 2004, more than 50 new ventilators with various characteristics were introduced for clinical use.^{15,16}

Early mechanical ventilators provided modes for which breaths were delivered according to a preset frequency and inspiratory time regardless of any inspiratory effort on the part of the patient (what anesthesiologists of the time called



Fig. 1.8 Top left, Morch ventilator; bottom left, Engstrom 300 ventilator; right, Emerson post-op ventilator. (From Mushin WW, Rendell-Baker L, Thompson PW, Mapleson WW: *Automatic ventilation of the lungs*, Oxford, 1980, Blackwell Scientific.)

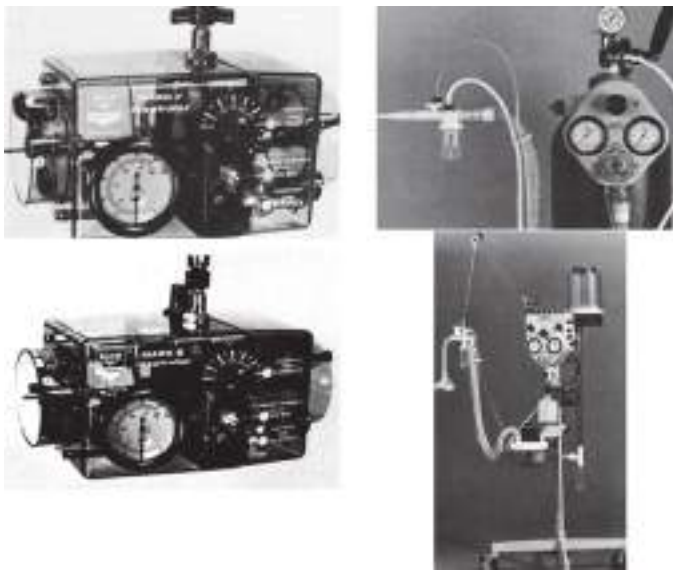


Fig. 1.9 Top left, Bird Mark 7 ventilator; top right, Puritan-Bennett TV-2P ventilator.; bottom left, Bird Mark 8 ventilator; bottom right, Puritan-Bennett PR-2 ventilator.

“controlled” ventilation). The early Bird and Bennett ventilators developed in the 1950s allowed for initiating inspiration by detecting the patient’s inspiratory effort, called “assisted ventilation.” This feature was incorporated in later modes that also had preset breath frequency (called *assist/control*, a term that is anachronistic but which persists to this day). The terminology related to modes of ventilation has evolved along with the complexity of ventilator technology (see [Chapter 46](#)). In 1967, the addition of positive end-expiratory pressure (PEEP) as a feature was introduced for use in patients dying from the newly described acute respiratory distress syndrome (ARDS). The use of PEEP helped to stabilize the alveoli and keep them from collapsing at the end of exhalation. Other forms of modern



Fig. 1.10 The Bennett MA-1 ventilator, introduced in 1967, played a major role in making mechanical ventilatory support routinely available in intensive care units throughout the world.



Fig. 1.11 Siemens Servo 900.

ventilation include intermittent mandatory ventilation (IMV), introduced in 1971, followed by synchronized IMV, in 1975, and mandatory minute volume ventilation in 1977.^{1,4} Pressure-support ventilation and pressure-controlled ventilation were introduced in the 1980s, followed by airway pressure release



Fig. 1.12 Left, Covidien 840 ventilator; middle, Viaysis Avea ventilator; right, Siemens Servo I ventilator.

(APRV) ventilation and inverse ratio ventilation. In the 1990s, volume-support ventilation, pressure-regulated volume control (PRVC), and adaptive support ventilation (ASV) were introduced. Automatic tube compensation (ATC), proportional assist ventilation (PAV), neutrally adjusted ventilatory assist (NAVA), APRV, and other modes of ventilation were introduced around or shortly after 2000. In fact, there are now hundreds of names of modes of ventilation, making a classification system essential for understanding ventilator technology (see Chapter 46).

Because traditional short-term mechanical ventilation, regardless of mode, necessitates using an endotracheal tube, there is always the potential for one or more serious complications. The most common is an infection referred to as ventilator-associated pneumonia (VAP). VAP is a potentially deadly and very costly complication of invasive mechanical ventilation that develops when microorganisms accidentally enter the airway from the mouth and/or gastrointestinal (GI) tract. There has been a concerted effort to try to support the patient's inadequate ventilation and/or oxygenation by using non-invasive positive pressure ventilation or high-flow nasal cannula therapy in order to avoid the need for endotracheal intubation and the resultant risk of developing VAP.

Airway Management

Airway management involves the use of various techniques and devices to establish or maintain a functional airway. Tracheotomies may have been performed to relieve airway obstruction in 1500 BC.⁶ Galen, the Greek anatomist, described a tracheotomy and laryngeal intubation in AD 160. Vesalius, another anatomist, described a tracheotomy in an animal in 1555.^{1,6} In 1667, Hooke described a tracheotomy and the use of a bellows for ventilation.⁶ In 1776, tracheal intubation was suggested for resuscitation.⁶ In 1880, MacEwen reported successful oral endotracheal intubation in his patients.⁶ O'Dwyer further described the technique for endotracheal tube placement. By 1887, Fell had developed a bellows–endotracheal tube system for mechanical ventilation, and this system was used in 1900 to deliver anesthesia.⁶

In 1913, the laryngoscope was introduced by Jackson. Additional early laryngoscopes were designed by Kirstein, Janeway, and others.^{1,6} Endotracheal intubation for anesthesia administration was firmly established by World War I. After the war, Magill introduced the use of soft rubber endotracheal tubes, which made blind nasal intubation possible, as described by Magill in 1930.⁶ In 1938, Haight advocated nasotracheal suctioning for secretion removal, and in 1941, Murphy described the ideal suction catheter, which included side holes known as “Murphy eyes.”⁶ The double-lumen Carlen tube for independent lung ventilation was introduced in 1940, followed by a double-lumen tube developed by Robertshaw in 1962. Damage to the trachea by the tube cuff was reduced with the introduction of low-pressure cuffs in the 1970s.⁶

RULE OF THUMB Tracheotomies may have been performed to relieve airway obstruction as early as 1500 BC. Galen, the Greek anatomist, described a tracheotomy and laryngeal intubation in AD 160. Vesalius, another anatomist, described a tracheotomy in an animal in 1555.

Cardiopulmonary Diagnostics and Pulmonary Function Testing

Pulmonary function testing comprises a wide range of diagnostic procedures to measure and evaluate lung function. The volume of air that can be inhaled in a single deep breath was first measured in 1679, and the lung's residual volume (see Chapter 20) was first measured in 1800.⁹ In 1846, Hutchinson developed a water seal spirometer, with which he measured the vital capacity of more than 2000 subjects.^{9,17} Hutchinson observed the relationship between height and lung volume and that vital capacity decreases with age, obesity, and lung disease. Hering and Breuer described the effects of lung inflation and deflation on breathing—the Hering-Breuer reflex—in 1868.⁴ In 1919, Strohl suggested the use of forced vital capacity (FVC), and in 1948, forced expiratory volume in 1 second (FEV₁) was suggested as a measure of obstructive lung disease by Tiffeneau.⁹

Arterial and venous oxygen and carbon dioxide contents were measured in 1837, and methods to measure blood oxygen

and carbon dioxide levels became available in the 1920s. These early methods for measuring blood oxygen, carbon dioxide, and pH were slow and cumbersome. In 1967, combination of the pH, Clark, and Severinghaus electrodes produced a rapid and practical blood gas analyzer for routine clinical use.^{1,4} The ear oximeter was introduced in 1974, and the pulse oximeter was introduced in the 1980s. Sleep medicine became well established in the 1980s, and it was then that polysomnography became a routine clinical test, often performed by RTs.

PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS AND EVENTS

American Association for Respiratory Care

Founded in 1947 in Chicago, the Inhalational Therapy Association (ITA) was the first professional association for the field of respiratory care.^{1,4,5} The purpose of the ITA was to provide for professional advancement, foster cooperation with physicians, and advance the knowledge of inhalation therapy through educational activities.⁵ The ITA provided a forum to discuss the clinical application of oxygen therapy, improve

MINI CLINI

Preparing a Presentation for Respiratory Care Week

Problem

You are a staff therapist in a 300-bed hospital. Your supervisor asks you to prepare a 20-min presentation on the history and development of the respiratory care profession to be presented at the department's annual Respiratory Care Week luncheon. How would you gather the information needed and develop your presentation?

Solutions

First, review this chapter to get an overview of the history and development of the respiratory care profession. You may also want to read one or two of the supplemental references that are cited. Next, go to the AARC website (see www.AARC.org) and review the "Resources" and "Site Map" sections, which list many helpful resources. You should be able to find sections on "The History of the AARC," "Strategic Plan of the AARC," "Position Statements," and "White Papers." There will also be a portal to the AARC's Virtual Museum. You should also find a section on Respiratory Care Week. Review the material that the AARC has provided and develop an outline of your presentation. Your outline may include a brief overview of the history of science and medicine, the development of the respiratory care profession, and the future of respiratory care in the 21st century. Once you have your outline, decide on your delivery method. PowerPoint slides are easy to make and use. If you choose to do a PowerPoint presentation, a good rule of thumb is about one slide per minute, so you would need about 20 slides. Using your outline, begin to develop your presentation.

During the 1980s, the AARC began a major push to introduce state licensure for RTs based on the National Board for Respiratory Care (NBRC) credentials.¹⁸ As of 2022, a total of 49 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico had state licensure or some other form of legal credentialing required for the practice of respiratory care. State licensing laws set the minimal educational requirements and the method of determining competence to practice. Competency is typically determined by obtaining a passing grade on a credentialing examination (administered by the NBRC) after graduation from an approved training program. State licensing boards also set the number of continuing education credits required to maintain active licensure.

patient care, and advance the art and science of the field.¹ The ITA had 59 charter members.¹ It became the American Association for Inhalation Therapists (AAIT) in 1954, the American Association for Respiratory Therapy (ARRT) in 1973, and the **American Association for Respiratory Care (AARC)** in 1982.^{4,5} Today, the AARC has a formal affiliation with all 50 state respiratory societies (known as *chartered affiliates*), as well as with similar organizations in several foreign countries.¹⁷

RULE OF THUMB Founded in 1947 in Chicago, the ITA was the first professional association for the field of respiratory care. The ITA became the AAIT in 1954, the ARRT in 1973, and the **AARC** in 1982.

The stated mission of the AARC is to "encourage and promote professional excellence, advance the science and practice of respiratory care, and serve as an advocate for patients, their families, the public, the profession and the respiratory therapist."¹⁹ The AARC serves as an advocate for the profession to legislative and regulatory bodies, the insurance industry, and the general public. To fulfill its mission, the AARC sponsors many continuing educational activities, including international meetings, conferences, and seminars (including virtual offerings during the pandemic), publications, and a sophisticated website (see www.AARC.org).¹⁸ Finally, in an effort to ensure that the unique practice interests of AARC members are addressed (e.g., neonatal/pediatrics, adult acute care, management, home care, diagnostics), members are invited to join one or more of 10 Specialty Sections (**Box 1.1**) within the AARC designed to facilitate networking and the free exchange of ideas (see **Chapter 2** for further details). Annually, the AARC also acknowledges individuals who have made sustained and substantial contributions to the profession as **Fellows of the American Association for Respiratory Care (FAARC)**.

RULE OF THUMB The stated mission of the AARC is to "encourage and promote professional excellence, advance the science and practice of respiratory care, and serve as an advocate for patients, their families, the public, the profession, and the respiratory therapist."

Many volunteers who have been elected to the AARC or House of Delegates leadership positions or have been asked to chair important committees started by volunteering at the

BOX 1.1 American Association for Respiratory Care Specialty Sections

- Adult acute care
- Continuing care/rehabilitation
- Diagnostics
- Education
- Home care
- Long-term care
- Management
- Neonatal/pediatrics
- Sleep
- Surface and air transport

affiliate level. Student members of the AARC are always welcomed as volunteers, especially at the affiliate level. Student members of the AARC have access to a wide array of resources that can greatly enhance the experience of becoming a professional RT.

Respiratory Care Week

In November 1982, President Reagan signed a proclamation declaring the third week of each October as National Respiratory Care Week. Since then, Respiratory Care Week has become a yearly event to promote pulmonary health and the work of RTs in all care settings. RTs (and students) around the United States use Respiratory Care Week to celebrate their profession and dedication to high-quality patient care. Many respiratory care departments use the opportunity to conduct special events in their hospitals to help raise awareness of the vital role the RT plays as a member of the health care team. Other departments plan community activities to help the public understand the importance of good lung health and the role RTs play in diagnosing and treating breathing disorders. Respiratory Care Week is also an excellent opportunity for respiratory therapy students to become ambassadors of the profession to the rest of the student body. Some respiratory therapy classes conduct free breathing tests on campus, in shopping malls, or in community centers.

Board of Medical Advisors

Because RTs practice under medical direction, the AARC leadership receives formal input from physicians on all matters and questions pertaining to patient care. The **Board of Medical Advisors (BOMA)** is the group of physicians who provide this valuable input (see [Chapter 2](#) for further details).

American Respiratory Care Foundation

Established in 1970 by the AARC, the **American Respiratory Care Foundation (ARCF)** is a not-for-profit charitable foundation that helps promote and further respiratory care. Commonly known as the Foundation, the ARCF collects and manages contributions from individuals, corporations, and other foundations to promote education among RTs (including scholarships for advanced training) and to recognize individual achievements of excellence in clinical practice, chronic disease management, public respiratory health, scientific research, and scholarship (see [Chapter 2](#) for further details).

RULE OF THUMB Established in 1970 by the AARC, the **ARCF** is a not-for-profit charitable foundation that helps promote and further respiratory care.

International Council for Respiratory Care

The **International Council for Respiratory Care (ICRC)** is an AARC-sponsored organization dedicated to the globalization of high-quality respiratory care. As mentioned previously, having formally trained professionals working in a dedicated department to assume full responsibility for

providing respiratory care under medical direction was unique to North America (i.e., both the United States and Canada). However, during the 1970s and 1980s, when many foreign physicians came to the United States to study, they became aware of what an RT was and the important role RTs play in hospitals nationwide. When these physicians returned to their native countries, they wished to have their own specialized teams able to provide the same level of high-quality respiratory care. However, because the health care delivery system is structured differently in each country, the specially trained teams were most often made up of nurses, physicians, or physical therapists, not RTs.

Formed in 1991, the ICRC (in close collaboration with the International Committee of the AARC) began to offer fellowships to interested foreign clinicians that provide the opportunity to visit the United States for 2 weeks before the annual International Respiratory Congress to observe how respiratory care is practiced in various settings. Pre-pandemic, the idea was to allow these international fellows to observe how the various components of respiratory care are practiced throughout the United States. The international fellows then took back to their home countries ideas and practices that could be integrated into their unique health care delivery systems. The program had been so successful that many countries (e.g., Mexico, Costa Rica, Taiwan) are starting to establish respiratory therapy training programs modeled after the American training system (see [Chapter 2](#) for further details). The success of these programs suggests that they will resume full force once the pandemic subsides.

National Board for Respiratory Care

The credentialing body for registered RTs began in 1960 as the American Registry of Inhalation Therapists (to test and credential registered therapists), and a certification board was established in 1968 to certify technicians.^{1,4} These two groups merged in 1974 as the National Board for Respiratory Therapy, which became the **National Board for Respiratory Care (NBRC)** in 1983.^{1,4} Also in 1983, the National Board for Cardiopulmonary Technologists joined the NBRC, and the credentialing examinations for pulmonary function technology were brought in under the respiratory care umbrella.^{1,4}

RULE OF THUMB For requirements for testing, examination schedules, study guides, and requirements for maintaining your CRT or RRT credential, check with the NBRC (see www.NBRC.org).

In 1998, the NBRC renamed the lower-level *certified respiratory therapist (CRT, or entry-level respiratory therapist)*; the advanced level remained registered respiratory therapist (RRT, or advanced-level RT).²⁰ Until 2015, there were separate NBRC written exams for the CRT and the RRT credential. However, in 2015, the NBRC merged the two written exams into one known as “The Multiple Choice” or “TMC” exam, with a higher passing score (also known as “cut-score”) for the RRT credential. While attaining the CRT credential only requires passing the TMC exam, the RRT credential continues to have

an additional credentialing exam requirement which is comprised of several clinical simulations. Not surprisingly, this second RRT credentialing exam is known as the Clinical Simulation Exam or simply the “CSE.” It should be noted that as of the revision of this chapter for this edition of Egan’s, it appears that effective 2027, the CSE credentialing exam will likely be eliminated and the TMC exam will be modified to reflect more critical thinking type questions, while retaining the cut-score distinction for earning the CRT or RRT credential.

In addition to the CRT and RRT, the NBRC began offering specialty examinations for pulmonary function technology in 1984 and neonatal/pediatrics in 1991. Because of the proliferation of new technologies, other specialty credentials including the Adult Critical Care Specialty (ACCS) and the Asthma Educator Certification (AC-E) have been introduced since then (see [Chapter 2](#) for further details).

NATIONAL BOARD FOR RESPIRATORY CARE

Committee on Accreditation for Respiratory Care

In 1956, the first guidelines for respiratory care educational programs were published, followed in 1963 by the formation of the Board of Schools to accredit programs.¹ The Board of Schools was replaced by the Joint Review Committee for Inhalation Therapy Education (JRCITE) in 1970, led by Fred Helmholtz, its first chairman.^{1,4} The JRCITE became the Joint Review Committee for Respiratory Therapy Education (JRCRTE) in 1977 and then the [Committee on Accreditation for Respiratory Care \(CoARC\)](#) in 1996 (see www.coarc.com).⁴ Today, respiratory care educational programs in the United States and Canada are accredited by CoARC in collaboration with the Association of Specialized and Professional Accreditors (see [Chapter 2](#) for further details).^{21,22}

RESPIRATORY CARE EDUCATION

The first formal educational course in inhalation therapy was offered in Chicago in 1950.¹ In the 1960s, numerous schools were developed to prepare students to become RTs. Early programs concentrated on teaching students the proper application of oxygen therapy, oxygen delivery systems, humidifiers, and nebulizers and the use of various IPPB devices. The advent of sophisticated critical care ventilators, blood gas analyzers, and monitoring devices in the 1960s and 1970s helped propel the RT into the role of cardiopulmonary technology expert.

Respiratory care educational programs in the United States are offered at technical and community colleges, 4-year colleges, and universities. These programs are designed to prepare competent RTs to care for patients. The minimum degree required to become an RT has traditionally been an associate degree.²¹ However, many associate degree graduates see great opportunity in pursuing their bachelor’s degree and some even higher degrees—master’s and doctorates. At present, there are approximately 443 degree programs in the United States, including 1 in Puerto Rico and 11 master’s degree programs. In

addition, there are several accredited respiratory care programs in Canada; and a handful in Mexico, South America, Japan, India, Taiwan, Qatar, and other countries.^{23,24}

RULE OF THUMB Jobs in management, education, research, or advanced clinical practice normally require bachelor’s- or graduate-level educational preparation.

The AARC completed a Delphi study and held two important Education Consensus Conferences in the early 1990s to assess the status of respiratory care education and recommend future direction for the field.^{25–28} The first conference suggested that major trends affecting the field were advances in technology; demographic trends and the aging of the population; a need to provide better assessment, outcome evaluation, problem solving, and analytic skills; use of protocol-based care; and the need to increase the focus on patient education, prevention, and wellness, to include tobacco education and smoking cessation.²⁷ The conference concluded that the curriculum should encompass a broad scope of clinical practice, a significant arts and science component, emphasis on communication skills, and a minimum of an associate degree to enter practice. The second Educational Consensus Conference, held in the fall of 1993, focused on strategies to implement the recommendations made at the first conference.²⁸ Both conferences identified the need for more baccalaureate and graduate degree programs in respiratory care. The view that programs should prepare students better in the areas of patient assessment, care plan development, protocols, disease management, pulmonary rehabilitation, research, and geriatrics/gerontology became well accepted.^{29,30}

The profession of respiratory care has been described as “a calling or vocation requiring specialized knowledge, methods, and skills as well as preparation, in an institution of higher learning, in the scholarly, scientific, and historical principles underlying such methods and skills.”³¹ The authors noted that professional roles are different and more complex than technical roles, which are oriented to performing specific tasks as ordered by the physician. Examples of professional roles in respiratory care include patient assessment and education, care plan development, ventilator management, disease management, pulmonary rehabilitation, and respiratory care consulting services. Technical roles may include basic task performance (e.g., oxygen, aerosol therapy, bronchial hygiene), routine diagnostic testing (e.g., electrocardiography, phlebotomy), and other routine tasks in which little or no assessment is required and decisions are limited to device selection and fine-tuning therapy.³¹ In professional practice, the therapist may function as a physician extender who applies protocols or guidelines.³¹ Examples include making protocol-based ventilator adjustments, applying assessment-based care plans, and performing advanced procedures such as arterial line insertion and management, intubation and extubation of patients, applying ventilator liberation or weaning protocols, and applying advanced cardiopulmonary technologies

(e.g., extracorporeal membrane oxygenation, nitric oxide therapy, aortic balloon pumps).

Notably, although economic, educational, and institutional forces may sometimes limit respiratory care in certain settings to a task-oriented, technical role,³¹ there remain many opportunities for the RT to function as a physician extender, in a role similar to that of the **physician assistant**. Working under the supervision of a physician, the physician assistant may perform many medical procedures that might otherwise be performed by a physician. In a similar way, the respiratory physician extender such as pulmonologist assistant or anesthesiologist assistant offer the potential to improve the quality of care while controlling costs and minimizing unnecessary care. Many authorities believe that the critical thinking, assessment, problem-solving, and decision-making skills needed for advanced practice in the 21st century require advanced levels of education.³¹

In 1998, Hess³² observed that a task orientation has coincided with a pattern of overordering and misallocation of respiratory care services. Therapist-driven protocols have helped address these concerns by shifting the role of the RT to more of a consultant, allowing him or her to assess the patient and then develop, modify, and implement a care plan once the physician has ordered the protocol.³² Protocol-based care has been shown to be safe and effective while reducing misallocation of care and helping to control costs.^{33,34} Acceptance by physicians of RTs in such consultative roles depends on the specific setting and importantly, on the professionalism, education, and skill of the RT at the bedside.³²

In 2001, a report titled *Conference Proceedings on Evidence-Based Medicine in Respiratory Care* was published.³⁴ Evidence-based practice requires careful examination of the evidence for diagnosis, treatment, prognosis, and, in turn, practice using a formal set of rules.³⁵ The best evidence is used for clinical decision making, which should lead to optimal respiratory care.³⁵ Evidence-based practice has been advocated for all respiratory care delivered.

MINI CLINI

Educational Program Advisory Committee

Problem

You are asked to serve on your respiratory care educational program advisory committee. The committee wants to know how respiratory care education has developed and where it should be headed. You are appointed as a member of a subcommittee to research these issues. What should you do?

Solution

You may want to read the sections in this chapter that cover the history and development of respiratory care education to get an overview. You may wish to obtain copies of some of the reference materials that are cited. Items that may be helpful are the AARC Delphi Study,²⁶ reports of the AARC education consensus conferences,^{27,28} and articles about the future of respiratory care.^{30–33,37,38} You may wish to review the AARC strategic plan (see www.AARC.org) and AARC statements regarding respiratory care education and credentialing.¹¹ After reviewing these materials, you should be well prepared to discuss the future direction of your educational program.

In 2002, the AARC, NBRC, and CoARC published their *Tripartite Statements of Support* (since retired in December 2020) which suggested that all RTs seek and obtain the RRT credential.³⁶ Endorsement of advanced training in respiratory care persists, including efforts to create and expand formal education and credentialing of anesthesiologist assistants. An AARC white paper followed in 2003, which encouraged the continuing development of baccalaureate and graduate degree programs in respiratory care (see [Chapter 2](#) for further details).³⁷

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SUMMARY CHECKLIST

- RTs apply scientific principles to prevent, identify, and treat acute or chronic dysfunction of the cardiopulmonary system.
- Respiratory care includes the assessment, treatment, management, control, diagnostic evaluation, education, and care of patients with deficiencies and abnormalities of the cardiopulmonary system.
- The AARC is the professional association for the respiratory care profession in the United States, with tremendous impact on respiratory care world-wide.
- RTs work under the direction of a physician who is specially trained in pulmonary medicine, anesthesiology, or critical care medicine.
- The American Registry of Inhalation Therapists was founded in 1960.
- The NBRC, the credentialing board for RTs, was founded in 1974.
- The first Board of Schools was established in 1963.
- The CoARC now accredits respiratory care educational programs.
- As the physiologic basis for oxygen therapy became understood, use of oxygen to treat respiratory disease became established by the 1920s, and oxygen was used routinely in hospitals by the 1940s.
- Use of aerosolized medications for the treatment of asthma began in 1910, with numerous new drugs being developed in the 20th century and continuing up to the present.
- Mechanical ventilation was explored in the 1800s. In 1928, Drinker developed his iron lung; this was followed by the Emerson iron lung in the 1930s, which was used extensively during the polio epidemics of the 1940s and 1950s, and the modern critical care ventilator, which became available in the 1960s.
- The ITA was founded in 1947, becoming the AAIT in 1954, the AART in 1973, and the AARC in 1982.
- The AARC now has eight specialty sections to provide resources to members based on where they are employed and practice.
- The ARCF offers many scholarships and grants to respiratory therapy students and is promoting advanced training for RTs through scholarships, etc.
- Although originally found only in the United States and Canada, the practice of respiratory therapy is quickly expanding around the world.
- Respiratory Care Week is a yearly event to promote the profession and raise awareness of the importance of good lung health.
- Many authorities endorse obtaining a bachelor's degree as the minimum credential for respiratory care practice and advanced degrees for research or advisory roles in respiratory care.

MULTIMEDIA RESOURCES

Additional Resources

NBRC <https://www.nbrc.org>

The Profession of Respiratory Care

Brian K. Walsh



OUTLINE

Introduction, 16

Scope of Respiratory Care Practice Today, 16

Practice Settings, 16

Respiratory Therapy Department Composition, 16

Department Director, 17

Educational Coordinator, 17

Quality Assurance Coordinator, 17

Researcher/Scientist, 18

Supervisors/Lead Therapists, 18

Respiratory Therapists, 18

Medical Director, 18

Designations and Credentials of Respiratory Therapists, 19

Professional Respiratory Care Organizations Today, 19

American Association for Respiratory Care, 20

National Board for Respiratory Care, 20

Commission on Accreditation for Respiratory Care, 21

American Respiratory Care Foundation, 21

Coalition for Baccalaureate and Graduate Respiratory Therapy Education, 21

International Council for Respiratory Care, 22

Other Organizations Affecting Respiratory Care, 22

Joint Commission, 22

Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, 22

Association for the Advancement of Medical Instrumentation, 22

Respiratory Therapy Education, 23

Degree Advancement Programs, 23

State Licensure, 24

Professionalism, 24

The Future of Respiratory Care, 24

Pulmonary Disease Manager, 25

Advance Practice Respiratory Therapist, 26

References, 26

CHAPTER OBJECTIVES

- Describe the roles and function of the American Association for Respiratory Care, National Board for Respiratory Care, and the Commission on Accreditation for Respiratory Care within the respiratory care profession.
- Describe how professional and medical organizations contribute to the development and quality of the medical profession.
- Discuss the scope of respiratory care practice.
- Identify the settings in which respiratory therapists practice.
- Describe the roles and responsibilities of the director, education coordinator, quality assurance coordinator, supervisors/lead therapist, clinical staff, researcher, and medical director.
- Discuss accreditation, credentialing, medical direction, and licensure aspects of the respiratory care profession.
- Identify the roles that each professional respiratory therapist must play in the future growth of the respiratory care profession.

KEY TERMS

accreditation

American Academy of Sleep Medicine

American Association for Respiratory Care

American Society of Anesthesiologist

American Thoracic Society

Association for the Advancement of Medical Instrumentation

Board of Directors

Board of Medical Advisors

Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services

clinical staff

CoBGRTE group

credentialing

credentials

department director

educational coordinator

House of Delegates

International Council for Respiratory Care (ICRC)

licensure

medical director

misallocation

National Association for Medical Direction of Respiratory Care

National Board for Respiratory Care
quality assurance coordinator
researcher

Respiratory Care journal
scientist
scope of practice

Society of Critical Care Medicine
supervisors/lead therapists
The Joint Commission

INTRODUCTION

The profession of respiratory therapy was officially established in the United States in 1930s¹ and has grown to approximately 191,457 respiratory therapists (RTs).² In the early years, RTs were often referred to as “oxygen technicians” or “oxygen orderlies” because most of their activities involved moving compressed cylinders of oxygen and administering oxygen. Most of these hospital employees were trained on the job. In the late 1940s through early 1950s, short training programs began to appear. The profession of respiratory therapy has grown drastically from those humble days. With the growth of mechanical ventilation therapy and monitoring the side effects of general anesthesia following surgery, the first postoperative care and intensive care units were born. Visionary anesthesiologists and intensivists valued our profession and began to train and use our services as physician extenders to safely and effectively provide mechanical ventilation. Just like oxygen therapy was to the birth of our profession, the volume and complexity of the patients we serve, and the advancement of respiratory therapies have not only sustained the profession but have grown it. Currently, respiratory therapy is one of the fastest-growing healthcare professions. This chapter will provide an overview of the profession of respiratory therapy today.

SCOPE OF RESPIRATORY CARE PRACTICE TODAY

According to the [American Association for Respiratory Care \(AARC\)](#), “Respiratory Therapists are healthcare professionals whose responsibilities include patient assessment, disease management, diagnostic evaluation, management, education, rehabilitation and care of patients with deficiencies and abnormalities of the cardiopulmonary system. The [scope of practice](#) includes the application of technology and the use of protocols across all care sites including, but not limited to, the hospital, clinic, physician’s office, rehabilitation facility, skilled nursing facility, and the patient’s home.”³ These responsibilities are supported by education, research, and administration. In addition, RTs perform several diagnostic activities ([Box 2.1](#)). The focus of patient and family education activities is to promote knowledge and understanding of the disease process, medical therapy, and self-help. Public education activities focus on the promotion of cardiopulmonary wellness.⁴

We live in exciting times for the profession of respiratory therapy. The information age of the future will be replete with changes in the scope of our practice. The science of respiratory therapy will continue to expand at the same pace as medicine.⁵ The scope of practice will continue to incorporate data-driven and evidence-based new technologies, new therapeutic approaches, and data management skills.

PRACTICE SETTINGS

RTs provide direct care that ensures people recover from a wide range of medical conditions. RTs get to know their patients and their families and have the gift of helping them through trying times. You will find RTs in a variety of settings from the confines of a climate-controlled hospital or medical office to the extreme temperature changes of interfacility transport ([Box 2.2](#)). There are several combinations of practice and patient populations from which an RT can choose to work.

RESPIRATORY THERAPY DEPARTMENT COMPOSITION

Providing respiratory therapy is a business, and over the years, the business of providing respiratory therapy has greatly evolved. Like all well-run health-related businesses, the goal is to provide excellent service to clients. Interestingly, RT departments serve several clients. RT department clients include the patients to which we provide respiratory therapy, the nursing units, and the physicians supported by the department. We often share responsibilities with monitoring, conducting tests, and providing care with the nurses and physicians with whom we work side by side.

Most RT departments are centralized, meaning they have centralized leadership, policies, procedures, medical direction, equipment, and staff. However, there are a few hospital systems that embrace a decentralized model. A decentralized model provides RT services as part of a service line with individualized leadership that may or may not be an RT. There are pros and cons to each model, but a discussion of these is outside the

BOX 2.1 Respiratory Therapist Diagnostic Scope of Practice Activities

Diagnostic activities include but are not limited to:

1. Obtaining and analyzing physiologic specimens
2. Interpreting physiologic data
3. Performing tests and studies of the cardiopulmonary system
4. Performing neurophysiologic studies
5. Performing sleep disorder studies

Therapy includes but is not limited to:

1. The application and monitoring of medical gases and environmental control systems
2. Mechanical ventilator management
3. Insertion and care of artificial airways
4. Bronchopulmonary hygiene
5. Administration of pharmacologic agents
6. Cardiopulmonary rehabilitation
7. Hemodynamic cardiovascular support
8. Sleep support

BOX 2.2 Practice Settings of Respiratory Therapist

- Hospitals: providing respiratory therapy and patient education to individuals suffering from asthma and other respiratory conditions.
- Providing lifesaving therapies:
 - Intensive care units: managing ventilators that keep the critically ill alive.
 - Emergency rooms: delivering lifesaving therapies.
 - Operating rooms or postoperative care units: working with anesthesiologists to monitor patients' breathing during or following surgery.
- Newborn and pediatric care units: helping with conditions ranging from premature birth to cystic fibrosis.
- In patients' homes: providing regular checkups and making sure people have the resources they need to keep them out of the hospital.
- Sleep laboratories: helping diagnose life-altering disorders like sleep apnea.
- Skilled nursing facilities and pulmonary rehabilitation programs: helping older people breathe easier and get more out of life.
- Outpatient specialty clinics or medical offices: conducting pulmonary function testing and providing patient education.
- Hospitals or medical offices: providing smoking cessation programs assisting those who want to kick the habit for good.
- Ground and air transport programs: rushing to rescue people in need of a higher level of care.
- Hospital, insurance companies, or medical offices: providing disease management helping devise care plans for patients with complex respiratory diseases.

scope of this chapter. Although there are different compositions of respiratory therapy departments, this section will explore the ideal department. Fig. 2.1 illustrates the typical organization chart for a department with a clinical ladder.

Department Director

The most important element for delivering quality respiratory care is department leadership. The primary leader of the respiratory therapy department is the RT in the role of **department director**. Although this position may have many different names—director, technical director, department chief, manager, etc.—regardless of term used, the department director must be a highly skilled RT, energetic, forward thinking, innovative individual whose primary role is the quality of respiratory therapy delivery through the continued development of the science and practice of the profession. For this section, we will refer to this individual as the department director. Department direction is often the responsibility of the manager or coordinator of a respiratory therapy department, who must ensure the equipment and the associated policies, procedures, guidelines, and protocols have sufficient quality to ensure the safety, health, and welfare of the patient.

Medical devices are regulated under the *Medical Device Amendment Act of 1976*,⁶ which comes under the authority of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA). The FDA also regulates the drugs that are delivered by RTs. The purpose of the FDA is to establish safety and effectiveness standards and to ensure that these standards are met by equipment and pharmaceutical manufacturers.

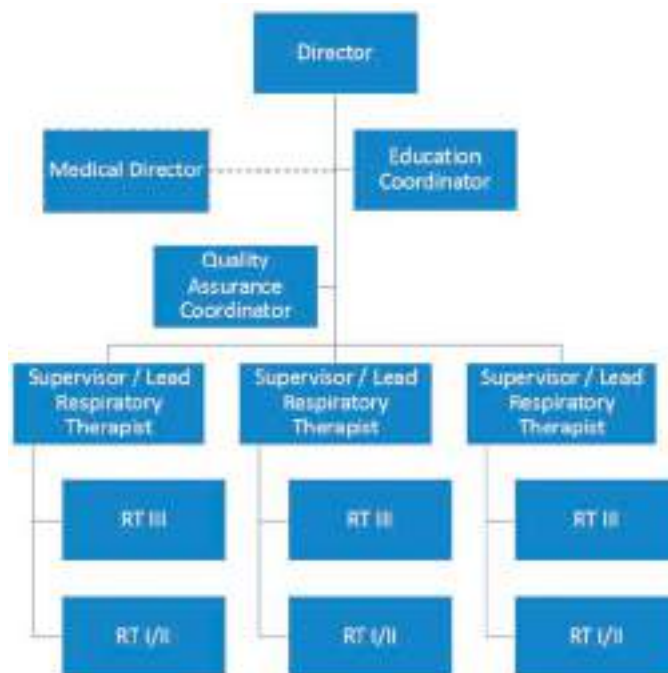


Fig. 2.1 Organizational Structure of a Typical Large Respiratory Therapy Department. RT, Respiratory therapist.

Procedures and protocols related to the use of equipment and medications must be written to provide a guide for the RT to follow. This ensures the consistency of the care provided. In addition, equipment must be safety checked and specific maintenance procedures must be performed on a regular basis. Because of rapidly changing respiratory care technology, the job of the Department Director poses significant challenges. Circuit boards and computers have replaced simpler mechanical devices. New medications and delivery devices for the treatment of asthma and newer strategies for treating other respiratory diseases (e.g., ventilatory approaches for acute respiratory distress syndrome [ARDS]) continue to evolve. Individuals responsible for department direction must ensure that these new devices, methods, and strategies are not only effective but also have value.

Educational Coordinator

The **educational coordinator** is tasked with individually assessing the educational needs of the RTs within the department and assigning resources to help reduce educational deficiencies. This includes the development and execution of orientation and continuing competency programs. In addition, this person is part of the leadership of the department and helps develop educational plans related to new technology being evaluated or instituted. In smaller departments, this role can be picked up by the director, manager, supervisors, or experienced RTs with an interest in education. This role is essential to ensure the coordination of education to improve quality and compliance with standards and policies and procedures.

Quality Assurance Coordinator

As the profession of respiratory care continues to move from a task and procedure-focused profession to the value associated

BOX 2.3 Change From the Volume to the Value Paradigm

- Traditional: Efficiency = RVU/FTE
- Value-based: Efficiency = Benefit/FTE

FTE, Full-time equivalents; RVU, relative value unit.

with those procedures, our quality metrics have changed and become more complex. The **Quality Assurance Coordinator** helps evaluate not only the efficiencies of the **clinical staff** but also the value associated with the practice of respiratory care. Traditionally, efficiencies were determined by the number of procedures (measured by relative value unit (RVU)/time standard) divided by the effort, largely measured by full-time equivalents (FTEs). This was easy to do, but to measure value, one must take into consideration things such as risk–benefit ratio or defined benefit, which can be more difficult (Box 2.3).

Value-based efficiency is determined by the amount of benefit provided by the therapy offered divided by the effort in FTEs. As you can imagine, benefit can be determined in cost savings, survival, or perceived benefit from the patient. Most value-based models use cost as the objective measure. Cost-efficient care is often viewed as higher-quality care.

In addition, as professionals, it is proper for us to determine the quality of care provided by evaluating the care we provide as well as the associated outcomes. This requires resources. As with the educational coordinator in smaller departments, this role can be picked up by the director, manager, supervisors, or experienced RTs with an interest in quality. This role is an integral part of a professional respiratory care department and identifies opportunities to improve the care provided and works hand in hand with other department leaders to develop appropriate action plans.

RULE OF THUMB High-quality care is always safe and efficient.

Researcher/Scientist

A role that has been growing over the years is the role of respiratory therapy **researcher or scientist** (see Chapter 8).

This role has been beneficial in the profession of nursing. As we switch to more value-based care, evidence of the benefit to our practice is paramount. Some department leaders have started to invest into their practice by employing scientists to help study new and old practices and technology in an effort to continuously improve the care the department provides. These individuals are expert clinicians and have advanced degrees in science. This role not only investigates the research questions of the department leaders but also helps the clinical staff in asking and solving their own questions about the care they provide.

Supervisors/Lead Therapists

Supervisors or **lead therapists** are roles that are defined by their names. They are often more experienced, are higher credentialed, and hold a higher level of education. These RTs help oversee and ensure the day-to-day functionality of the

department by assigning clinical staff to appropriate workloads and areas in which the department provides services. The supervisor or lead therapist is also a clinical resource to assist with advanced procedures (low-volume, higher-risk), emergencies, and consults with difficult-to-treat patients. The supervisor is also the front-line leader for managerial issues such as personnel disputes or conflicts.

Respiratory Therapists

The heart of any respiratory therapy department is its front-line bedside staff. All other roles within the respiratory therapy departments are supportive to these individuals. The product of the department is largely provided by this role group. Most, if not all, clinical staff of the average department must be licensed (registration in Alaska) to provide respiratory therapy. This is a standard that is not negotiable, and it is in the best interest of our patients. Licensed RTs have met a minimum level of competency determined by the **National Board for Respiratory Care** (NBRC) **credentialing** system.

Clinical staff are deemed competent and provide the care outlined by the departments' policies, procedures, and standards of practice. They often work 12-hour shifts providing care to patients from the youngest (the neonates) to the oldest (the geriatric patients). In larger departments, they are often allowed to specialize and work in a specific area of the hospital. Clinical staff are first-line providers of respiratory care but also responders to rapid-response alerts, codes, and disaster/fire emergencies.

The largest personnel group and arguably the most important is the direct care RT. In addition to a competent and dedicated department director and using well-constructed respiratory care policies, procedures, guidelines, and protocols, it is important to have capable RTs able to provide high-quality respiratory care. The quality of RTs depends primarily on their training, education, experience, and professionalism. Training teaches students to perform tasks at a competent level, whereas clinical education provides students with the knowledge they can use in evaluating a situation for making appropriate decisions.⁴ Both adequate training and clinical education are required to produce qualified RTs who can assess patients and apply respiratory care procedures. Box 2.4 describes the professional characteristics of an RT.

Medical Director

The profession of respiratory care is one of the few allied health professions that requires a medical director. The **medical director** of respiratory care is professionally responsible along with the department director for the quality of clinical care that is delivered (see Box 2.1). The medical director is also responsible for assisting and advising the department director on the management of the respiratory therapy department. Medical direction for respiratory care is usually provided by a pulmonary/critical care physician or an anesthesiologist. Whether the role of a respiratory care service medical director is designated as a full-time or part-time position, it is a full-time responsibility; the medical director must be available on a 24-hour basis to consult with and give advice to other physicians and the respiratory care

BOX 2.4 Professional Characteristics of a Respiratory Therapist

- Completes an accredited respiratory therapy program
- Obtains professional credentials
- Participates in continuing education activities
 - Adheres to the code of ethics put forth by the institution or state licensing board or both^a
 - Joins and is actively involved in professional organizations

^aEthical standards include respecting the privacy of the patient's personal health information (see [Chapters 5](#)).

BOX 2.5 Responsibilities of a Medical Director of Respiratory Therapy

- Medical supervision of respiratory therapists in the following areas:
 - General medical, surgical, and respiratory nursing wards
 - Intensive care units
 - Ambulatory care (including rehabilitation)
 - Pulmonary function laboratory
- Approval of department clinical policies and procedures
- Supervision of ongoing quality assurance activities

staff. [Box 2.5](#) describes the responsibilities of a medical director of respiratory therapy.

Perhaps the most important part of providing high-quality respiratory care is to ensure that the care being provided is clinically indicated, the procedure or protocol is based on the most current research, and it is delivered competently. Traditionally, a physician has evaluated patients for respiratory care and has written the specific respiratory therapy orders for the RT to follow. However, such traditional practices often have been associated with what has been called “**misallocation** of respiratory care.”^{7–9} Such misallocation may consist of ordering therapy that is not indicated, ordering therapy to be delivered by an inappropriate method, or failing to provide therapy that is clinically indicated. Studies show that misallocation of respiratory care occurs frequently and therefore requires focused attention by the department director and medical director to eliminate waste and add value to the care provided by the department.

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Scope of Practice

Problem: You are a staff therapist in a 300-bed hospital. You have been asked to assist a new physician with a bronchoscopy but are not sure the physician has the competency to safely complete the procedure. Additionally, you have not completed a competency for bronchoscopy assist. The physician assures you they are competent and can show you exactly what you should do. How should you investigate whether: (a) the physician is given privileges to perform, and (b) you should assist without proper training.

Solution: All hospitals should have a “look-up” reference listing the privileges extended to all healthcare providers. This is usually located within the intranet of the hospital. If you are concerned that you do not have the proper training, then you likely do not. You should call your resource or supervisor in an effort to locate a resource who can assist—not in an effort of denying support to a fellow colleague. If your supervisor cannot assist, escalate the concern to the director or medical director for assistance.

DESIGNATIONS AND CREDENTIALS OF RESPIRATORY THERAPISTS

The two levels of general practice credentialing in respiratory care are: (1) certified respiratory therapists (CRTs), and (2) registered respiratory therapists (RRTs). Students eligible to become CRTs and RRTs are trained and educated in Commission on Accreditation for Respiratory Care (CoARC)-accredited colleges and universities. After completion of an accredited respiratory care educational program, a graduate may become credentialed by taking the written entry-level examination called The Multiple Choice or TMC exam. The exam has one minimum passing score (cut scores) for CRT and a higher cut score that allows the candidate to be eligible to take the clinical simulation examination and become an RRT. Once candidates meet or exceed the higher cut score, they are eligible to take a second exam to determine if they meet the minimum level of competency to become an RRT. Students who complete a 2-year program graduate with an associate degree, and students who complete a 4-year program receive a baccalaureate degree. Some RTs go on to complete a graduate degree (e.g., master's or doctorate) with additional study in the areas of respiratory care, education, management, research, or health sciences. The further development of graduate education in respiratory care has been encouraged by the AARC, and several master's-level RT programs are currently available. [Table 2.1](#) summarizes the distribution of credentialed RTs; organizations overseeing respiratory care education (e.g., CoARC) are reviewed later in this chapter.

RULE OF THUMB For testing requirements, examination schedules, study guides, and requirements for maintaining your **credentials**, check with the NBRC website (nbrc.org).

PROFESSIONAL RESPIRATORY CARE ORGANIZATIONS TODAY

A profession is often described by its advancing science, technology, and practice; continuous improvement in quality by active participation of its members; maintenance of minimal competency (in our case credentialing); and leadership, research,

TABLE 2.1 Distribution of Active Credentialed Practitioners

Credential Type	Population of Credentialed Practitioners
Certified respiratory therapist (CRT)	269,910
Registered respiratory therapist (RRT)	179,823
Certified pulmonary function technologist (CPFT)	14,468
Registered pulmonary function technologist (RPFT)	5,276
Neonatal/pediatric specialist (CRT-NPS or RRT-NPS)	17,219
Adult critical care specialist (RRT-ACCS)	5,196
Sleep disorders specialist (CRT-SDS or RRT-SDS)	983

Note: Based on the NBRC 2021 Examinations in Review. <https://www.nbrc.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/2021-Exams-in-Review-Info-Sheet.pdf>. An RT may hold more than one credential.

and innovation. Professionalism is a key attribute to which all RTs should aspire and that must guide respiratory care practice. *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary* defines a *profession* as “a calling that requires specialized knowledge and often long and intensive academic preparation.” A professional is characterized as an individual conforming to the technical and ethical standards of a profession. RTs demonstrate their professionalism by maintaining the highest practice standards, engaging in ongoing learning, conducting research to advance the quality of respiratory care, and participating in organized activities through professional societies such as the AARC and associated state societies. Therefore, it is important to be involved with your professional societies. [Box 2.4](#) lists the professional characteristics of the RT. These characteristics are vitally important because the continued value and progress of the field depends critically on the professionalism of each practitioner.

American Association for Respiratory Care

The AARC is the leading national and international professional organization for RTs. Founded in 1947, the AARC is a not-for-profit professional association with a membership that consists largely of RTs but also includes physicians, nurses, physical therapists, paramedics, and researchers. The AARC serves a larger societal mission to advocate and enhance the professionalism of RTs.

RULE OF THUMB The AARC offers discounted memberships to students and early career RTs.

The art of respiratory care (updates, best practices, opinions, themed highlights, professionalism, humanitarian topics) is supported by the AARC through the online version of the professional magazine called the *AARC Times*. In addition, there are “News Now” feeds that you can get via email and multiple social media feeds. The science of respiratory care is supported by the AARC through peer-reviewed publications and journal conferences held by the [Respiratory Care journal](#). *Respiratory Care journal* is composed of an editorial board and editor-in-chief who are scientific leaders within the profession.

The AARC has several standing and special committees to support the profession, as well as an executive office that works tirelessly to advance, advocate, and promote the profession of respiratory care. Funding for the operations of the AARC is derived from membership dues, advertisements, grants, and educational programs and conventions. The AARC offers active, student, associate, life, and honorary memberships. The AARC provides some of the highest membership benefits found in health-related professional organizations while maintaining some of the lowest dues. The AARC has multiple specialty sections with several having Board of Director seats to help represent all specialties.

RULE OF THUMB The AARC is the only professional association dedicated to promoting, advancing, and advocating for RTs.

Board of Directors

Governance of the AARC comes through the [Board of Directors](#) (BOD) in conjunction with the [House of Delegates](#) (HOD). The

executive government of the AARC is composed of the BOD made up of no more than 18 active AARC members with at least five officers (six when there is a president-elect) and 12 directors-at-large, and section chairs serving as directors from each of the specialty sections having 1000 members or more. The AARC BOD members are selected by the membership of the organization. The Executive Director of the AARC serves as an advisor to the BOD and reports to the current President of the AARC.

House of Delegates

The HOD is a representative body for the chartered affiliate societies. This body is leveraged to help contribute to sustaining, governance, and future growth of the profession through grassroots efforts. The HOD is a vehicle in which the general membership can bring issues or concerns from the local society to the national organization. The HOD is a conduit of information, reporting activities, data, and information to the local level. HOD membership is composed of one to three members from the chartered affiliates. Currently, there are 50 delegations representing 48 states. Vermont and New Hampshire, and Maryland and the District of Columbia have combined resources to make up one delegation each. The territory of Puerto Rico has its own delegation. The HOD elects officers from its delegation. The officers are Speaker-Elect, Speaker, Immediate Past Speaker, and Treasurer/Secretary.

Board of Medical Advisors

The [Board of Medical Advisors](#) (BOMA) also helps assist the AARC with the governance of practice-related issues and consists of representatives of the AARC's sponsoring organizations: the [American Thoracic Society](#) (ATS), the American College of Chest Physicians (ACCP), American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), the American College of Allergy, Asthma, and Immunology (ACAAI), the National Association for Medical Direction of Respiratory Care (NAMDR), [Society of Critical Care Medicine](#) (SCCM), and the [American Society of Anesthesiologists](#) (ASA). BOMA consist of no fewer than 12 members nominated from each sponsoring society. The BOMA chair serves on the AARC BOD, and the chair rotates so that each society will have a representative serve on the BOD.

President's Council

The President's Council is an advisory body composed of past presidents of the AARC. The council has significant experience and wisdom through their activities at the highest position within the AARC. The chair is elected by the members of the President's Council and serves in an advisory position to the BOD.

National Board for Respiratory Care

The NBRC is a voluntary credentialing agency founded in 1960. The NBRC's mission is to promote excellence in respiratory care by awarding credentials based on high competency standards while sharing the profession's goal of protecting and enhancing patient lives.¹⁰ The NBRC has established standards for the credentialing of RTs who work under medical direction and in cooperation with agencies setting educational standards and licensing agencies who provide licensing of RTs. These high standards have been recognized nationally and are the standard

for **licensure** in 49 states. The NBRC publishes an electronic newsletter called NBRC Horizons and provides a directory of credentialed individuals. In 2021, the NBRC administered 22,443 examinations totaling 492,875.¹¹

National Board for Respiratory Care Examinations

Table 2.1 provides an overview of the different professional credentials awarded by the NBRC with an approximate number of practicing individuals with those credentials. The NBRC examinations are graded with a minimum pass level pre-established by the examination committee using a modified Angoff procedure. This accepted psychometric procedure uses the judgements of content experts to determine the number of correct answers required to achieve a passing score for the examinations. The NBRC is governed by a 31-member Board of Trustees composed of representatives from four sponsoring organizations; the AARC, ACCP, ASA, and ATS.¹⁰ A Public Advisor is elected by the board to provide a consumer perspective.

The **National Asthma Educator Certification Board** (NAECB) was established in 2000 to develop and implement qualification/standards, as well as a certification examination for asthma educators on a national level. Recently, the NBRC acquired NAECB and are in the process of joining forces. The AE-C—credentialed individual is an expert in teaching, educating, and counseling individuals with asthma and their families in the knowledge and skills necessary to minimize the impact of asthma on their quality of life. RTs make ideal asthma educators because they are very knowledgeable on the optimal uses of medications and delivery devices.¹²

Commission on Accreditation for Respiratory Care

Professional **accreditation** of educational programs in respiratory care assures prospective students, their families, and the general public that the institution meets the minimum professional educational standards for the degree they are offering and there is reasonable evidence that they will continue to meet those standards in the future. The CoARC was founded in 1954 to accredit respiratory care degree programs at the associate, baccalaureate, and master's degree level in the United States and Puerto Rico.

As of December 31, 2021, there were a total of 447 accredited programs. There were 413 Entry into Respiratory Care Professional Practice, 6 Sleep Specialist programs, and 29 Degree Advancement (DA) programs and 1 Advanced Practice Respiratory Therapist program. Eighty-two percent of the entry-to-practice programs were at the associate degree, 17% at the baccalaureate degree, and 1% offered at the master's degree level. There has been a 35% decrease in AS programs since 2015.¹³

RULE OF THUMB CoARC is the accrediting body of respiratory therapy educational programs. CoARC-accredited programs meet the minimum professional educational standards.

American Respiratory Care Foundation

The American Respiratory Care Foundation (ARCF) is dedicated to promoting respiratory health through the support of

research, education, and patient-focused philanthropic activities in respiratory care. The ARCF Board of Trustees is composed of respiratory professionals, including emeritus trustees who conduct the business and manage the decisions of the ARCF.

The ARCF supports the Respiratory Care Journal Conferences, which are conferences designed to be evidence-based and timely and provide important information affecting the practice of respiratory care everywhere. These conferences are limited to the faculty and staff of the journal. Each topic is thoroughly presented by an invited expert, followed by heavy discussion among the faculty. The state-of-the-art proceedings appear in a special issue of Respiratory Care both in print and online.

As a part of their mission, the ARCF also provides and maintains three Undergraduate Student Awards, four Fellowship Awards, three Research Grants, seven Achievement Awards, and two Literary Awards and heavily supports the International Fellowship program. These grants, awards, and recognitions are the output of fundraising. The ARCF could not support research, education, and charitable activities to help improve the quality of our environment if it were not for the generosity of others.¹⁴ The ARCF holds annual fundraising events to ensure the success of the foundation. The AARC supports the ARCF with administrative assistance.

Coalition for Baccalaureate and Graduate Respiratory Therapy Education

The Coalition for Baccalaureate and Graduate Respiratory Therapy Education (CoBGRTE) is organized to help students, faculty members, and the general public learn about baccalaureate and graduate respiratory therapy education in the United States.

The objectives of CoBGRTE are to:

- Award scholarships to baccalaureate and graduate respiratory therapy students.
- Maintain a current roster of baccalaureate and graduate respiratory therapy programs located in regionally accredited colleges or universities in the United States.
- Provide a means of communication among respiratory therapy educators.
- Assist faculty members that are developing curricula for new baccalaureate and graduate respiratory therapy programs.
- Conduct research on respiratory therapy educational programs and the healthcare workforce.
- Engage in study and planning related to the development of new baccalaureate and graduate respiratory therapy programs.
- Assist associate degree respiratory therapy programs in developing consortium and transfer agreements with colleges offering baccalaureate and graduate degrees.
- Advocate for development and establishment of baccalaureate and graduate respiratory therapy programs.

The CoBGRTE BOD consists of 19 professionals in various positions within respiratory therapy. CoBGRTE awards eight merit scholarships and one research scholarship annually and publishes The Coalition Chronicle. The Chronicle helps to highlight programs and best practices of educational institutions. Currently, there are 69 institutional members that financially support CoBGRTE.¹⁵